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Ascension ™ & © Top Cow Productions

ON THE COVER

Ascension was illustrated by David Finch and Batt, and colored by Liquid Graphics. To learn more about these Top Cow creators, check out our "Eight to the Fore" feature on page 60.

X-Men ™ & © Marvel Characters Inc.

The **X-Men** cover was illustrated by Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend, and colored by Liquid Graphics. Mutate to page 68 to see what the new X-Men creative team has in store for Marvel's merry mutants.

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Hang 10! Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *Silver Surfer* #1/2 comic, featuring everyone's favorite cosmic surfer dude in a story by Tom DeFalco and Ariel Olivetti. Surf on over to page 96 for details.

"NO ONE ESCAPES THE SLEEPER!"

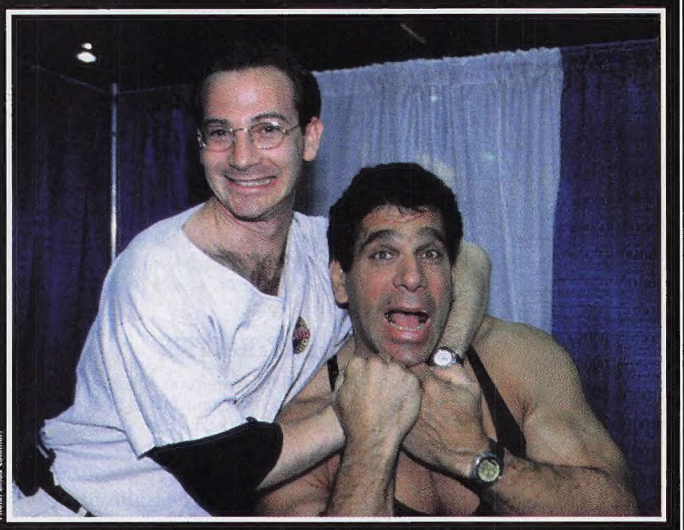

Photo: Linda Coleman

COMIC BOOK VIRUS?

With technology advancing so quickly, I'm always asked the question: "Are computers going to replace comics?" At *Wizard*, we spend a lot of time and energy on our America Online site and our website coming up with ways to enhance someone's online comic book experience. We've been very conscious *not* to put the magazine online and say, "Okay, now you can download it." We try to fit the product for the medium. So things we can't do in print we do online—like live interviews, chats with the *Wizard* staff and forums where fans can go to download images that we can't fit into the magazine. We try to enhance someone's experience with *Wizard*. The same is true for publishers who try to enhance a fan's experience with the characters.

There's also a tremendous difference between going into a store and buying a comic and being able to hold it, read, keep it—go back to it over and over again. People can't experience that in an electronic format. You can't hold a computer comic because it only exits in a cyber world. Ultimately, the one true human nature quality that will save comics from ever being consumed by digital media is collecting. I will never stop collecting and you won't stop collecting—whether it's action figures, comics, movie posters, Beanie Babies or whatever you collect. The real challenge is to produce a product that a fan doesn't want to stop buying, or to create new products that get fans excited about comics.

So there's no fear of computers killing comics. Computers can enhance the experience like TV or movies, but ultimately, they won't replace comics as long as publishers put out products you want.

And speaking of cool products....This issue features a great Q&A with X-Men writers Joe Kelly and Steve Seagle! There's also a look at the new *Gen13* creative team of John Arcudi and Gary Frank, as well as our annual "Eight to the Fore" feature spotlighting eight up-and-coming creators you'll want to keep your eyes on. And you absolutely can't miss our "All-*Wizard* Team" feature, where we create the ultimate superteam! I really think you'll like it.

And of course, there's the *Silver Surfer* #1/2 offer and Cliffhanger sketchbook, which gives you a sneak peek at Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell and Humberto Ramos' new comics. They look great.

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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We've been looking the wrong way.

DEAN KOONTZ'S

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DIMENSION FILMS

MAGIC WORDS

IN WITH THE NEW!

That's a big theme in the letters these days. Lots of mail we're seeing is on newer titles that you seem to be digging, like Marvel's *Deadpool*, DC's *Young Heroes in Love* and Awesome's *Kaboom*. There's also a lot of mail from people saying there's another new comic they'd just looove if only someone would publish one: *South Park*. Keep letting us know what new stuff you want to see in *Wizard* and hey—we'll keep bringing it your way.

Speaking of new titles...

Hey, Jim,

I was thinking about comics the other day when I had an interesting notion. Why doesn't DC's Eradicator have his own ongoing series? I thought about this and came up with a "top 10" list of monthly ongoing titles that I would like to see. Check it out!

10) *Eradicator: Protector of Krypton*, DC Comics

It would be cool to have this mysterious Superman supporting character in a high-profile monthly comic.

9) *Coda Island*, Image Comics/WildStorm Productions

Everybody remembers this place from *Gen13*. A lush, tropical island full of nothing but half-naked beautiful women is a natural for its own title. Hey, *Lady Death*, *Vampirella*, *Dawn*, *Shi* and even *Gen13* have almost nothing but skin in them, and look how well they do.

8) *Plastic Man*, DC Comics

Yeah, I know. DC already put out a *Plastic Man* title in the '60s and canceled it in the '70s. But I think Plas is entitled to another try. Plastic Man is one of the coolest characters in the DC Universe.

7) *Fire & Ice*, DC/Marvel/Image Comics

This one would be very hard to organize, but it could be outstanding if it worked out. The book could feature such characters as DC's Mr. Freeze and Ice Maiden, Marvel's Human Torch and Image's Burnout.

6) *Storm*, Marvel Comics

She's had a mini-series; she deserves a regular one. One of the chief characters in the X-Universe, Storm has some of the coolest powers of any superhero.

5) *Gon*, DC Comics/Paradox Press

Halfway through the list we find a little-known Japanese character called Gon. He's a tiny dinosaur about the size of a puppy that goes around exploring the wilderness. There was a black-and-white four-issue mini-series in 1996, and the one issue that I read was fantastic.

4) *The Astounding Scarlet Spider*, Marvel Comics

Gon and pal

So the cloning of Spider-Man wasn't such a big hit with the fans. But I think that everyone would love just one Scarlet Spider title to read. I think that almost all Spider-Man readers would buy it.

3) *Angela: Hellspawn Hunter*, Image Comics/Todd McFarlane Productions

In any list like this, you have to throw in an Angela title. In my opinion, the *Angela* mini-series that followed her first appearance in *Spawn* #9 was fantastic. An ongoing would be even better.

2) *Amalgam: Universes Merge*, DC/Marvel Comics

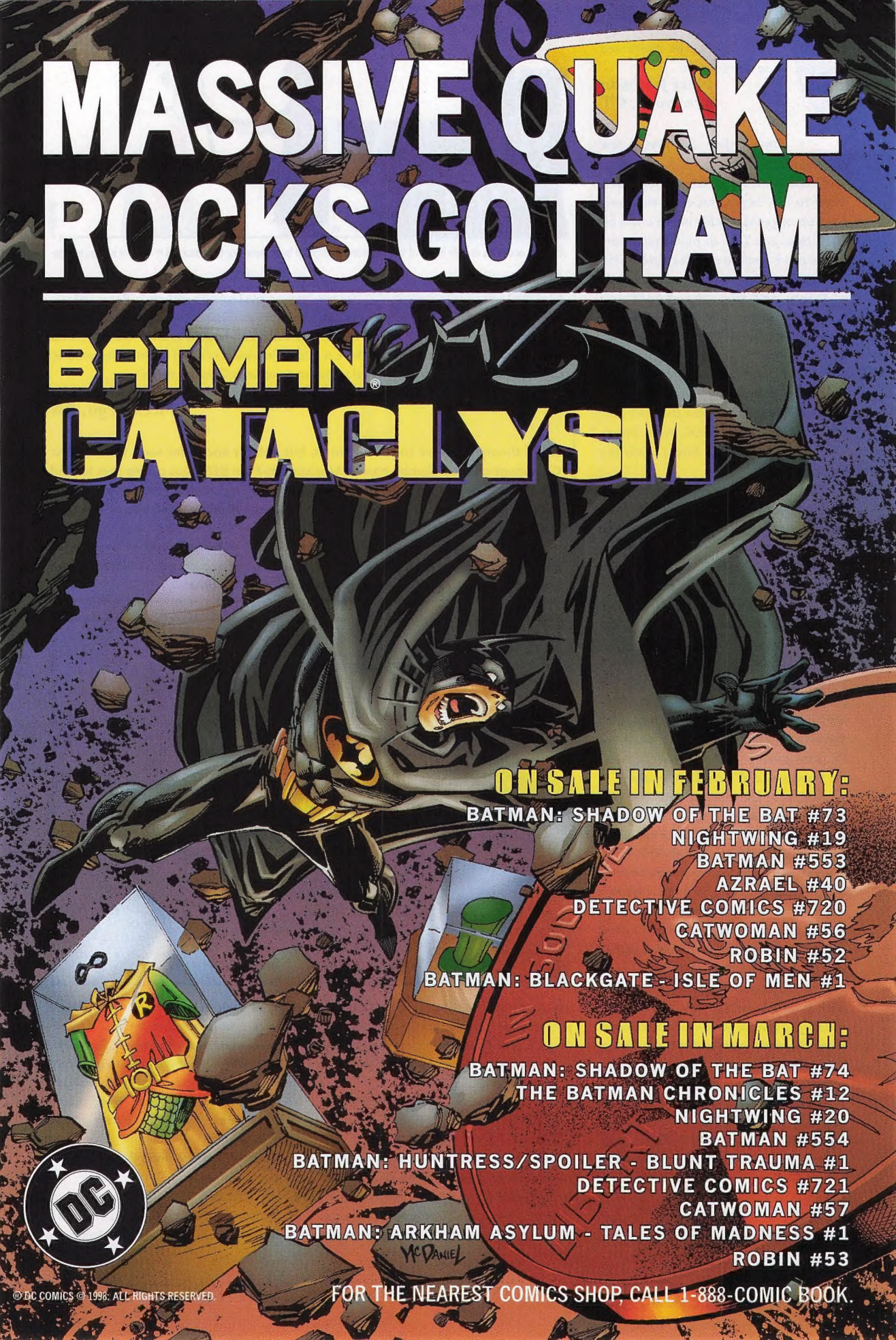
This book would take place in an alternate world where Access, Batman, Captain America and the Spectre were unable to stop the conflict between the twin gods seen in *Marvel vs. DC/DC vs. Marvel* and the Amalgam Universe lives on!

1) *Image Comics Presents*, Image Comics

This would be the queen-mother of all Image books, showcasing all the heroes of the Image Universe. Every person who reads more than one Image title would buy this, making it the probable number one comic in America.

Well, that's it. Other titles that didn't quite make the list include an ongoing *Sin City* title and the return of DC's *Adventure Comics*. I also considered a *Wizard* title called *Adventures with Jim McLauchlin*, but then realized that you probably wouldn't go for it.

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS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But I would be interested in seeing your list...

Matt Johnson
Simsbury, CT

Okey-dokey. But first, a few comments:

Coda Island? *Sounds pretty damn weak to me. Sorry, but even the most pent-up of geeks usually needs a tad bit more than just T&A to hold their interest for more than two issues. And by the way: I'd be willing to bet that a few fans of* **Dawn** *and the other books you mentioned might take issue with your assessment of these titles. Some may be on their way to Simsbury right now. Good thing you've got a nice common name like "Johnson."*

Plastic Man? *Well, now that he's part of the all-conquering JLA, more attention will be focused on him. I could see it happening.*

Fire & Ice? *The concept is just hot- and cold-based characters? Blah. Sounds like way too much of a stretch to make a good comic.*

Gon? *Hey! Whaddaya know? Our pals at DC are crankin' out a* **Gon Color Spectacular** *in April, featuring all-new material that's just been published in Japan. And yes, as the title implies, it'll all be in color.*

The Astounding Scarlet Spider? *Ugh.*

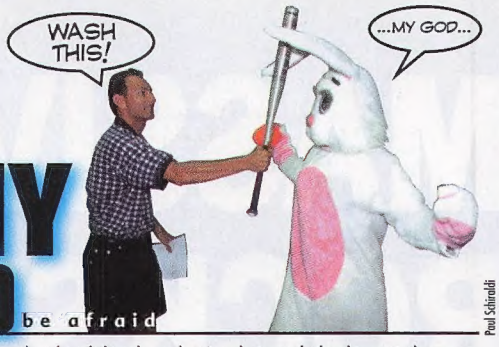
Image Comics Presents? *It might be passable, but it would never be the "number one comic in America." An issue with Spawn or Witchblade would do okay, but I'm sure people would prefer the regular* **Spawn** *and* **Witchblade** *books.*

Still, your list is pretty cool and very thought-provoking. Stuff I'd like to see? I could really go for a monthly dose of **Sin City**. *And I'm admittedly a child of 1970s Marvel, so I'd also love to see an ongoing* **S.H.I.E.L.D.** *and* **Dr. Strange**. *I think a counter-terrorism organization like S.H.I.E.L.D. is inherently cool and there's a wealth of great, other-worldly stuff that can be done with the good Doctor.*

Oh, yeah—your proposed **Adventures with Jim McLauchlin**? *My "adventures" usually just involve women of questionable moral character, grain alcohol, cow tipping, the Mafia, giant squids, beating the hell out of rental cars, invading people's swimming pools at 3 a.m. and other things not approved by the Comics Code Authority. So I think I'll have to take a pass on that. Unless I get to be drawn by Adam Kubert.*

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid



Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jim,

One day I was reading an issue of *X-Men* and came across Gambit's real name, Remy LeBeau. I wondered how in the world a writer came up with this name. So I got out an atlas (yes, I had waaaay too much time on my hands) and looked up Louisiana, since Gambit comes from the Cajun state. It turns out there is a town in Louisiana called "Remy" and another called "LeBeau." Is this how a Marvel writer came up with Gambit's name?

Tina Corrado
Pittsburgh, PA

Great theory! Wish we could confirm it, but nobody knows for sure. Writer Chris Claremont created Gambit back in* Uncanny X-Men *#266, but claims that he had left the title before Gambit was given a real name or anything was added to his backstory. Chris recommended we try Howard Mackie, who wrote the first* Gambit *mini-series.

But Mackie said that he had nothing to do with naming Gambit or any of that hoo-hah. Despite the fact that this is a recent comic occurrence, it looks like the origin of Gambit's name is already lost to the mists of time.

Dear Wizard,

Thank you for the Alex Ross "DC heroes" cover and mini-poster in *Wizard* #75. Can you guys push the right buttons to get the poster made in larger poster size? Or can you ask Alex if he'd just come over to my home and paint the scene on my wall? My wife makes a mean meatloaf.

Jay J. Bardyla
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Dy-no-mite, Jay J.! Them buttons have already been pushed. Alex says, "That image will be made into a limited-edition lithograph available at Warner Bros. Studio Stores sometime in 1998. They're definitely doing it, but it hasn't been put on their schedule yet."

As to your second question, Alex says, "I like meatloaf, but it'll have to be sometime later. I have several other houses to paint and several other wives' meatloaves to eat. Wait! How's that gonna look in print?"

Looks fine from here, Alex.

Dear Wizard,

I was watching "The New Batman and Superman Adventures" cartoon one day

and saw in the credits that Evan Dorkin and Sarah Dyer were the writers of one episode. Are these the same two people who do *Milk and Cheese* and *Action Girl Comics* from Slave Labor Graphics? If so, how did they get chosen to write cartoons?

Ben Higbie
Branchville, NJ

That be them. The folks who write the "Superman" portions of many of these shows are the same couple who crank out comics. The always-enthusiastic Dorkin says, "We basically got the 'Superman' gig because of our comic book work. When 'Superman' came up, Paul Dini, the producer, invited Sarah and I to do a script. Paul was familiar with our comics and he knew that we liked superheroes, but weren't exactly slavish in devotion towards them. We ended up working on four episodes and also wrote an upcoming Supergirl comic one-shot for DC that ties into her new animated origin. So there you go, Ben—a boring answer and a cheap plug. Welcome to comics."

Dear Jim,
Copyrights for most creator-owned books seem to list either a single writer/artist such as Frank Miller on *Sin City*, or a writer/artist team like Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon on *Preacher*. But a select few comics are owned outright by the writer alone, such as Kurt Busiek's *Astro City*. My question: Does Busiek actually design all his characters before handing them over to artists? If not, how does he maintain sole ownership of their properties?

Robert Young
Isle of Palms, SC

How? Pretty simply. A Spider-Man artist can work on Marvel Comics' property without owning it. And so artists Brent Anderson and Alex Ross can work on Astro City without ownership. Busiek says, "No, I don't design all the Astro City characters. But Juke Box Productions [Busiek's publishing company] secures the rights it needs via contractual arrangements with Brent and Alex."

Jim,
Hey, I don't want to have to point this out, but I don't think I'll be able to sleep until someone addresses the issue.

In *Wizard* #76's "Bunny Award" letter, it is pointed out that a shadow of Cyclops' hand falls over Jean Grey's crotch in an Alex Ross-drawn *Marvels* piece, and this foreshadows the eventual romantic relationship between the characters. Well, I noticed the shadow from Cyclops' *other* hand falls over Iceman's crotch. Could this be a sign that there are "untold tales" of the X-Men out

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on page 12 (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your info to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").

P E N P A L S

Cameron F. Johnson
Age: 14 Sex: Male
3032 Lake Forest Dr.
Greensboro, NC 27408
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Alison Wurth
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1309 Morningside Drive
Lake Wales, FL 33853-3905
Likes: *Glory, Bad Girls, Gen^{13}*

Donald Tucker
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Fitchburg, MA 01420
Likes: *Spawn, Batman: Shadow of the Bat, The Mask*

Dean Coles
Age: 20 Sex: Male
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OX14, 5LL, England
Likes: all X-titles, *Gen^{13}, DV8*

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Amarillo, TX 79109
All age 13; Sean: *Gen^{13}, Milk & Cheese*; David: *Double Impact, Witchblade*; James: *DV8, Catwoman*

Krista Reeves
Age: 16 Sex: Female
7700 Tapp Rd.
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
Likes: all X-titles, Sailor Moon, *Witchblade*

Anna Christie Fuentes
Age: 17 Sex: Female
6980 Sunrise Drive
Coral Gables, FL 33133
Likes: *Gen^{13}, DV8*, Sailor Moon

there? Perhaps Scott did a little...experimenting when he was younger? Does Jean know about this?

Just wondering.

Will Emero
Wemero@emich.online.edu

Wonder no longer and sleep well. There's nothing funny happening between Cyke and Iceman. According to that Alex Ross guy, "I consciously intended the shadow to be there on Jean. As I was painting, I realized a shadow needed to be on Iceman too. But nothing was meant by it, other than proper attention to detail given the source of light and the position of Cyclops' hand."

Alex added, "But what I can't figure out is why people are talking about this and not the sex scene hidden in Kingdom Come. It's there and no one has found it yet."

Alex speaks true. I've seen it. Dig out them Kingdom Come issues, kiddies. It's in there...somewhere.

Dear Jim,
I'm a big fan of the "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" TV series. I want to know if there are any plans to do a comic book version of this show. If so, when?

Rodolfo V. Martinez
Manassas, VA

There are plans. Dark Horse Comics has sewn up the "Buffy" comic license, and we should see comics full o' vamp-slab-bin' goodness starting in May 1998.

Yo, Jim,
If Marc Silvestri ever stops penciling *The Darkness*, will Joe Benitez take over? He was totally awesome in *The Darkness* #8!

Neville D. Porter
Honolulu, HI

You must be psychic. Benitez takes over as new penciler on February's The Darkness with #13, while Silvestri takes time off to work on Top Cow's movie and TV projects.

Dear Wizard,
When is that Batman/Gen[13] crossover you were talking about coming out?

Andy Schawl
Camanche, IA

The 12th of never. Due to the fact that proposed "Bat[13]" penciler J. Scott Campbell is now groovin' on his new creator-owned Danger Girl title, the idea has been tanked and replaced by a Superman/Gen[13] project slated for late 1998. Look for Adam Hughes to handle art chores.

Wizard,
What's keeping the "Gen[13]" animated movie from being finished on time? I've been waiting soooooo long to see that movie! Will it be anything like the comic?

David Forrester
Aurora, MO

WildStorm Productions Marketing Director Jeff Mariotte reveals, "Instead of being created by vast teams of animators working in some hidden fortress, 'Gen[13]' is largely the work of one man, Kevin Altieri. Since Kevin is the storyboard artist, co-writer and director, it's taken a little longer than any of us would have liked. You'll see it for sure in a direct-to-video release from Hollywood Pictures in 1998."

Mariotte goes on to say that the content is "very much like the comic. All your elements are there—humor, fun characters, hot babes and evil villains."

Hmmm. Sounds like a typical day at the Wizard office. Minus the hot babes, of course.

Dear Magic Words,
In an article in *Wizard* #65, Karl Kesel said that he had an idea for taking *Daredevil*, a title he was writing at the time, in an "entirely new direction" but also said that his plan hadn't yet been approved. Well, Kesel is now gone. So what was his big "new direction" gonna be?

Lenar Clark
Raytown, MO

Are you sitting down? Ya better be. Kesel wanted Matt Murdock, DD's alter ego and a highly respected lawyer in the Marvel Universe, to become mayor of New York. Marvel decided this would have too many repercussions across too many Marvel titles and nixed the idea.

Dear Wizards,
How does the Invisible Woman's costume turn invisible? And how come the Human Torch's suit doesn't burn up when he's "flamed on?"

Thomas Chun
tpchun@juno.com

'Cause both are made of "unstable molecules," a great way to explain away damn near anything in the Marvel Universe without having to get too technical.

Jim,
Why are you *Wizard* people thinking of coming to Mexico?

Gerson H. Lozano
glozano@infonavit.gob.mx

For the tacos.

Dear Wizard,
How do they fit five ounces of real milk into every three-ounce slice of Kraft cheese?

Geoff Patterson and
Elliot Shelton
Torrance, CA

Well, despite the fact that it took two of you geniuses to write this question, you got your math wrong. It takes five ounces of milk to make a three-

P E N P A L S

John Ta
Age: 15 Sex: Male
2600 N.W. 61
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
Likes: *Witchblade, X-Men*, all comics with chicks

Mario Cane
Age: 19 Sex: Male
3206 W. 95 St.
Cleveland, OH 44102
Likes: all X-titles, *Gen[13], Witchblade*

Josh R. Blythe & Dustin J. Quillen
Ages: Josh, 16; Dustin, 13
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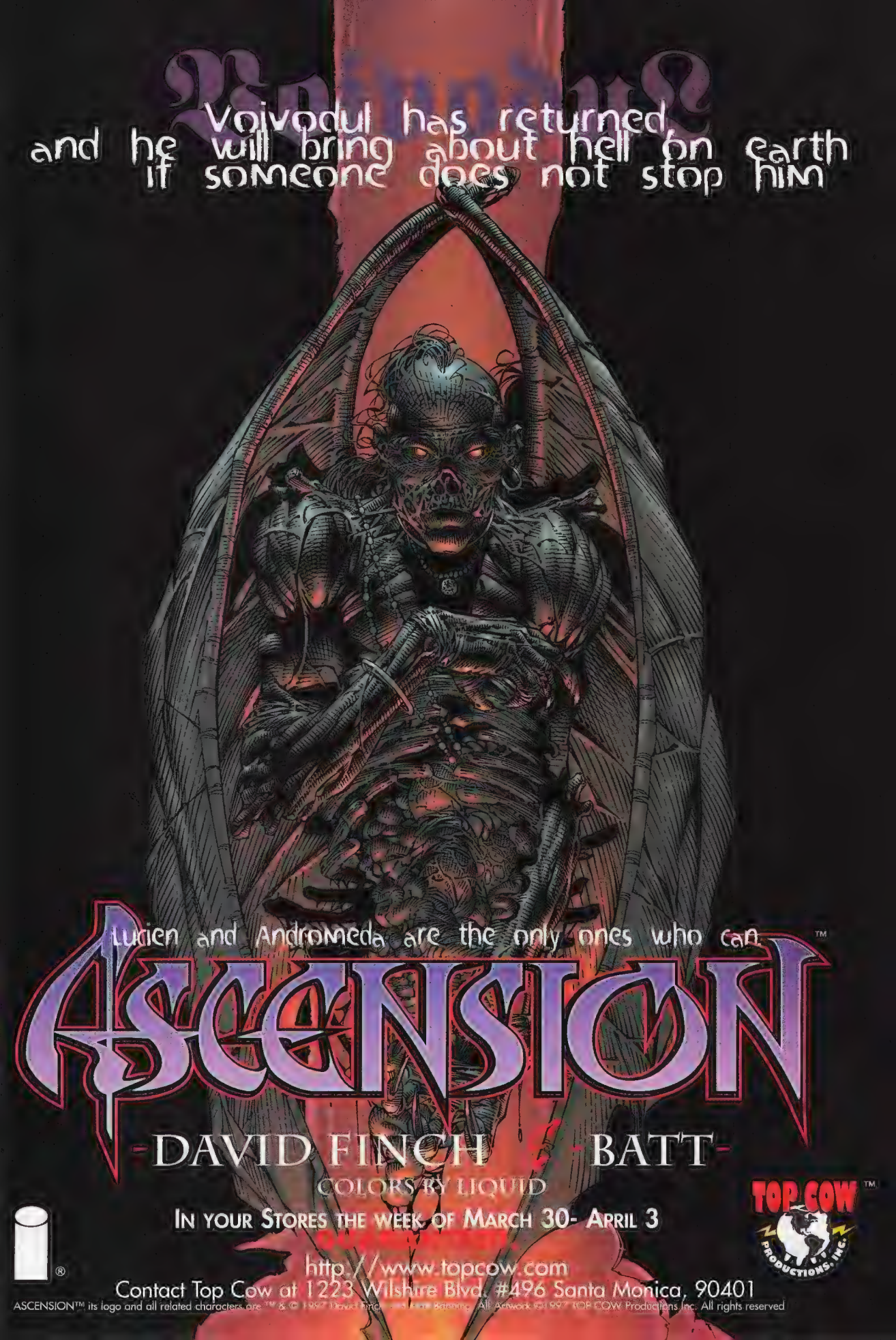
Wolverine, Spawn, Dragon Ball Z
Len Alan Thorson, 21/m
teutonicknight@hotmail.com
Avengers, JLA, various Marvels & DCs


Vojvodul has returned,
and he will bring about hell on earth
if someone does not stop him
Lucien and Andromeda are the only ones who can
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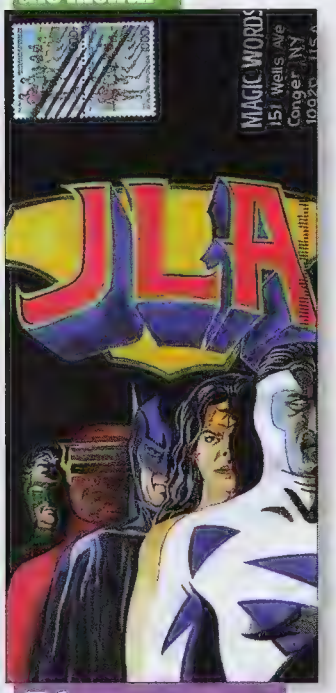
LETTER ART

Fans who have their letter art printed this month will each receive an issue of Event's *Painkiller Jane* autographed by artist Amanda Conner, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The creator of the best envelope wins a signed *Painkiller Jane* sketch by Conner, plus the signed comic and signed *Wizard* issue! (Thanks a bunch for the goodies, Amanda!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and **a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope. Good luck!

THE PRIZE

envelope of the month



JLA
Gregorius J. Bekasi
Indonesia

HULK VS. SPIDER-HAM
Chad Snyder
Libby, NY

CAP AND DEADPOOL: TIME TO PIE **Joel Harris** Lavrope, PA

BATMAN UNPANTSED **Ken Turner** Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

we're in the home stretch...

quarter ounce slice of Kraft cheese. Judy, one of the many helpful Kraft customer service representatives, tells us that "You need a lot of milk to make a little cheese. In fact, you need 10 pounds of milk to make one pound of cheese. Cheese is basically condensed milk with flavor added."

Whiz-boy,
When you were a junior in high school, what did you want to be?

Matt Westervelt
FactisES20@aol.com

A senior, I guess.

Dear Jimmy,
Love what you do with the magazine, whatever the hell it is you do.

Anyway, the writer of *Uncanny X-Men* #350 is a guy named Steven Seagle. Is this the same Steven Seagle that was in such movies as "Fire Down Below" and "Under Siege"?

Steve Ziesche
Farmer Moe@aol.com

Gee, high praise indeed. Love what you do with the farm, whatever the hell it is you do.

Anyhoo, X-writer Steven Seagle is not to be confused with action movie hero Steven Seagal. Constantly thwarted by this confusion, Seagle the writer refers to Seagal as a "monosyllabic, preposition-article-noun movie 'actor'—or a stand-in or whatever—who's just tryin' to rip off my tag to get recognition."

Maybe so, but I'm bettin' on Mr. "Marked for Death" to kick scrawny comic-writer butt any day of the week.

The fight is on, and I'll be over at the betting window taking action at 100-to-1 with Seagal as the favorite. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

If Jim McLauchlin was one of the Spice Girls, they'd have to call him "Smarmy Spice," or perhaps "Too-Damn-Fat Spice."

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Soldier of Fortune

Marvel hopes to cap-italize with second Captain America title

Marvel's popping a second Cap into comic stores on the 4th of July.

Tentatively titled ***Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty***, and co-plotted by the regular *Captain America* creative team of **Mark Waid** and **Ron Garney**, *Sentinel* also pairs Waid with **Andy Kubert**, the writer's artistic partner on *Ka-Zar*. To accommodate this second Captain America title, Waid and Kubert will leave *Ka-Zar* with issue #14.

"Marvel's taking a chance by adding another Cap title so soon after the relaunch," said Waid. "But I look at it as a tip of the hat to the success of *Captain America* and take it as a vote of confidence."

The announcement of this second Captain America title comes a mere two months after Captain America was incorporated back into the Marvel Universe after "Heroes Reborn." The new "Heroes Return" *Captain America* has maintained the high level of sales it enjoyed during "Reborn" and many see this second launch as an opportunity to cash in on a hot property.

The ripples of a second Captain America title will be felt throughout the Marvel Universe and more specifically, will affect the company's creative stable. As a result, a number of questions arise. Questions such as:

Why do a second Captain America title?

In one word: money.

In Captain America, Marvel has a: 1) hot comic property that fans are genuinely excited about; 2) a top-notch creative team in Kubert and Waid; 3) a mainstream media push because of the animated "Captain America" series coming in September.

All of these factors add up to a potential revenue bonanza for Marvel, despite concerns that it may be too soon to launch a spinoff title.

"I think it bolsters the Captain America franchise, shows the support Marvel is giving it and makes us [the *Captain America* creative team] feel like we're doing something right," said Waid. "This is the title for those fans who can't get enough of Cap."

When the word came from the Marvel offices of a second Captain America book, Kubert jumped at the opportunity to draw it and fulfill his lifelong dream to pencil the star-spangled superhero. "Marvel was going to do it and Mark wanted to write it," said Kubert. "And Cap's my dream, so I had to do it."

"Writing the regular *Captain America* series, I wanted to maintain consistency with the character," said Waid. "I also knew how bad Andy wanted to draw Cap, so it seemed like the perfect opportunity."

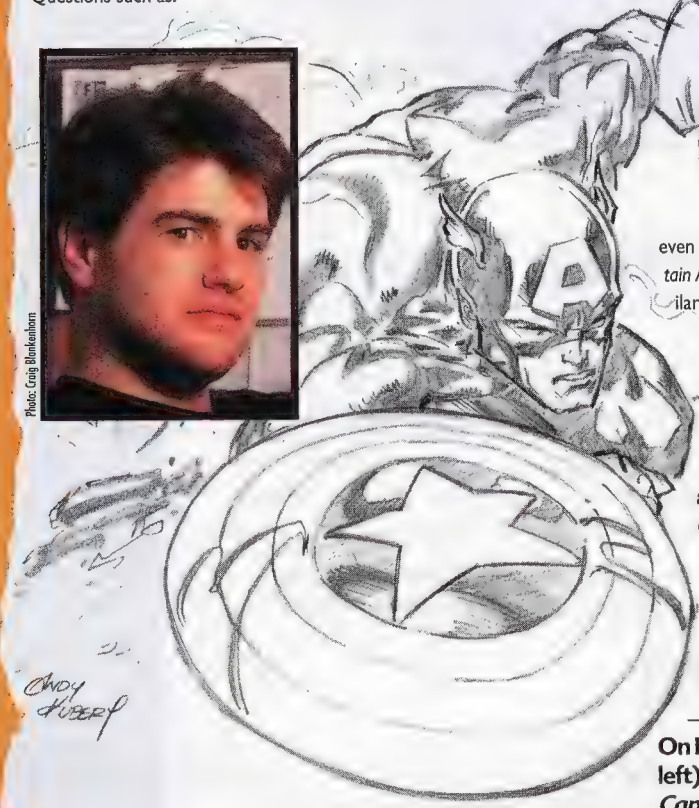
Beyond the creative desire of Waid and Kubert, Marvel Comics saw a chance to capitalize off of the success of the regular *Captain America* relaunch. On the heels of "Heroes Reborn," the "Heroes Return" *Captain America* is maintaining the high sales of its predecessor. If successful, the second Captain America title will undoubtedly spawn even more money for Marvel, possibly even making *Captain America* into one of its larger-selling franchises similar to *X-Men* or *Spider-Man*.

"The 'why' to do this comes on two levels," said Garney. "There's the business reason and the creative reason. And both seem to work out in this case."

How does Kubert's hiring affect regular *Captain America* penciler Ron Garney?

With the powerful presence of Kubert joining the Cap team, there is a question whether Garney will become overshadowed as the definitive Captain America penciler. "I don't think we'll be competing," said Garney. "Sometimes

Photo: Craig Blankenhorn



On Independence Day, Andy Kubert (above left) will try his white-hot hand at penciling *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty*.

competition swims around in my subconscious, but as Mark and [*Captain America* editor] Matt Idelson put it, this is a team effort. We're all working to make Cap the best."

Helping relieve any possible tension is the fact that Garney will co-plot *Sentinel* and hopefully raise his name recognition that way. "Ron's a big part of Cap's success," said Idelson. "And we want to keep him involved on a conceptual level with any new Cap-related projects that arise."

Will a second title dilute the Captain America franchise?

Marvel is risking the Cap franchise by adding a second title. The new series, which launches the same month as *Captain America* #7 is on stands, banks on the notion that people want more Cap. But is it wise to take that chance while *Captain America* is still in its still infant stages?

"I actually think it beefs up the Cap franchise," said Kubert. "It gets Cap's name out there more, and more exposure only helps."

Adding to the exposure factor is the "**Captain America**" animated series on Fox slated for September. It seems that Cap is getting a big push from Marvel.

"But why water down the franchise with a barrage of Cap stuff?" responded Garney. "That was the *first* thing I thought. But the *longer* I thought, the more I realized it could be a great vehicle to launch Cap stories that may not fit into the regular series. As long as we do good work, we can't lose."

How does Waid and Kubert's departure affect *Ka-Zar*?

"Unfortunately, it leaves *Ka-Zar* Waid- and Kubert-less," said Waid.

With *Ka-Zar* #14, Waid and Kubert leave the title and a creative team to be named will take over. **Christopher Priest** (*Quantum and Woody*) has been rumored to be taking over writing the book, while no artist is yet on the horizon. *Ka-Zar* #14 will be a double-sized issue in which Waid and Kubert will write and draw the first half of the book, with new creators taking over for the second half. "Andy and I will be wrapping up the High Evolutionary storyline in progress and setting a new status quo," said Waid. "Then the new creative team will make the book their own."

It's now up to Marvel to deliver and maintain the interest Waid and Kubert created with the relaunch of *Ka-Zar*. Will Marvel be able to keep the level of excitement? "It's not going to be easy to replace [Waid and Kubert]," said *Ka-Zar* editor Idelson. "But I think [Christopher Priest] has the capability of handling the character that these guys basically resurrected just as well. As for an artist, it's going to be hard to find a good artist to take over for Andy. *Ka-Zar*'s a great book and we're doing everything to keep it that way."

What are the implications of the second title throughout the Marvel Universe?

The almighty spinoff may be a trend at Marvel. **The Hulk** gains a second showcase in May, and rumors of another **Avengers** title happening at some point in 1998 swirl about. And bolstering Marvel's love with the number two is the recent announcement that the Spider-Man franchise will be trimmed from four to two monthly books and fans will get two issues of ***Uncanny X-Men*** and ***X-Men*** each summer month as the two titles go bi-weekly. With new additions such as this, Marvel appears to be trying to build "franchises" out of their high-profile characters. And who knows how long it will be before we see spinoffs on the other two "Heroes Return" titles, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*? ■ *Matthew Senreich*

What's it About?

Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty will feature stories that take place in regular Captain America continuity, but *don't* take place in the present day. The first story arc takes place during World War II and focuses on Cap's wartime sidekick, Bucky. "We're doing this story to give Bucky personality and define him as something more than just a costume," said writer **Mark Waid**. "After that, we'll have stories of World War II Cap, 1950s Cap and maybe even the Cap of the future."

"The stories will flush out the character a little more," said Idelson. "There are a lot of gaps in the Captain America legend and this series will make him more of a three-dimensional character."

The format is similar to DC Comics' *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*. "Like *Legends*, we're going to be doing the book in story arcs," said Kubert, who intends on drawing 10 issues a year. "I'll pencil a three-issue story arc here, take a single-issue story off, then do four more issues. And so on." ■ *MS*

Bad pie incapacitates mutant hero of millions. "Ah shu can havvo unda, sugah," mumbled Rogue in a horribly overdone Southern accent before fouling the Danger Room with the green apple splatters.

Spawn gets an even bigger gun. "This kicks ass!" commented Satanic champion of bums. "Combined with my near-limitless magic powers, this gun makes me unbeatable!"

Local comic fan hunted down and forced to wash at gunpoint. "He had head lice the size of McNuggets," said startled local authorities, "and he had chest hair growing through his Watchmen T-shirt!"

ahead

CLAREMONT DOES WOLVERINE!

NEW JLA LINEUP!

ROSS FLIES ON SUPERMAN!

Claremont Returns to 'Wolverine,' Adamantium May Follow

In April's ***Wolverine*** #125, the man who is Wolvie's father—at least in a figurative sense—drops by.

Logan is paid a return visit by the man who made him a star: **Chris Claremont**, the legendary X-Men writer who simultaneously brought both the **X-Men** and Wolverine to incredible heights of popularity on his 15-year run on the characters. "I'm definitely writing the book for one story arc," Claremont said, "although we haven't finalized how many issues that is yet. We're dealing with the logistics of the X-Men's 35th Anniversary this summer and coordinating all these books. As soon as we figure that out, we'll know how long I'm on for."

Claremont also promised another return visitor for the double-sized issue: "The occasion of the issue is Wolverine's birthday," said Claremont, "so Logan deals with what he always has to deal with on his birthday: A person who's out to kill him." The same nameless character who has appeared trying to kill Wolvie in backup stories in *Classic X-Men* and in *Wolverine* #11 shows up again. "It's an established character from Wolverine's past with an ax to grind who has the idea that 'Nobody will kill Wolverine but me.' Every birthday, this character is there, taking another shot."

The anniversary issue and birthday occasion also provide opportunity to wrap up the greatest dangling Wolverine plot thread of all: Will Wolvie get his fabled adamantium bones back? Claremont promises the issue will be settled, but isn't saying just how. "That question will be resolved once and for all in this issue," he certified, "at least as far as I'm concerned. 'cause 'once and for all' is an extraordinarily flexible term in comics." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Look out! When Chris Claremont revisits Wolverine, Wolvie might get his adamantium back.

With 'Arcanum' Suspended, Peterson Heads to Marvel

Unable to work out a continued financial deal to publish his creator-owned ***Arcanum*** at Top Cow Productions, creator **Brandon Peterson** suspends publication of the book after January's *Arcanum* #8. Peterson moves to Marvel Comics in March, where he will draw **Dr. Strange** in the anthology title *Journey into Mystery* #522-#524. For Peterson, the assignment is the culmination of a lifelong dream. "For some people it's Spider-Man, for some people it's Batman," said Peterson. "But for me, the character I've always wanted is Dr. Strange."

Taking full advantage of Peterson's flair for the magical in his artwork, writer Mark Andreyko is using Marvel's version of Count Dracula for the Strange tale. And what about that rumor that this three-issue run is a tryout for a regular Marvel gig down the line? "They've talked to me about some things, so it's not a bad rumor," replied Peterson. "They're definitely interested in having me do something else for them, but I don't want to say just what yet. I don't wanna jinx it." ■*Scott Brick*

Photo: Al Ortega

Peterson (above) moves to Marvel for Dr. Strange.

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• **Marvel Gets Byrned?** Maybe! Speculation holds that John Byrne will bring his talents to Marvel, where he may do a Superman/*Man of Steel* kind of reboot on Spider-Man, reworking Spidey continuity for the future.

• **'Excelsior!' is Coming!** And that's about all anyone knows. Marvel's much-rumored new-wave Excelsior! line will launch at some point in 1998. The only title we know of so far? Something called *Spider-Girl* written by Tom DeFalco (*Amazing Spider-Man*).

• **Death Comes Knocking!** When the X-upheaval hits this summer, one thing is known for sure: At least one X-Men character will die. As to who, Marvel is keeping its trap shut.

• **Avengers Assemble!** Plans are still sketchy, but it's looking like *Avengers, Captain America* and *Iron Man* will unite for a small all-Avengers story arc this summer.

• **Keep Your Eyes Open For...** Marvel to *do* the rumored "Heroes Reborn"-style deal with Event Comics head honchos Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. If it goes through, it looks like *Daredevil, Punisher* and *Black Panther* become the titles Quesada and Palmiotti oversee. Rumor has it Bill Sienkiewicz (*Moon Knight*) and Christopher Priest (*Quantum and Woody*) are getting in line to work on the titles.

• **Pacheco Moves!** Believe it or not, it looks like *X-Men* penciler Carlos Pacheco will actually give up the merry mutants for at least one year to work on an Avengers project with current *Avengers* scribe Kurt Busiek. Look for Pacheco's last *X-Men* to hit in early summer.

• **Pacheco's Replacement...** on *X-Men* is rumored to be none other than Jason Pearson of *Body Bags* fame. No one will confirm or deny, but Marvel buzz said Pearson's got the inside track.

• **Ross Gets Animated?** Mega-popular painter Alex Ross is reputed to be painting a mid-1998 Superman 60th anniversary one-shot. Rumored to be his hand-picked writer for the book? "Batman and Robin Adventures" producer (and occasional comic writer) Paul Dini.

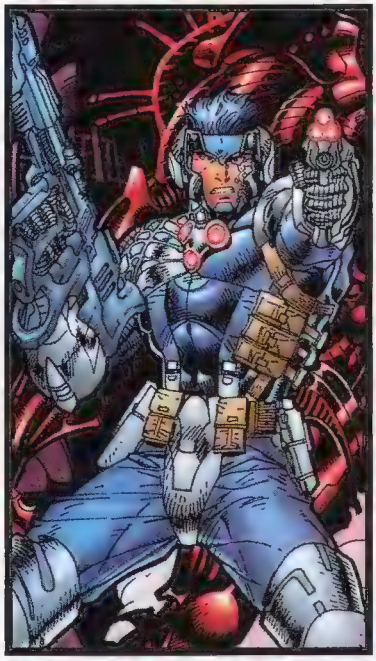
• **Superman and the Cable Guy!** Another Superman 60th anniversary project we hear is in the pipeline is by *Cable* artist José Ladrónn. Word is the very Kirby-esque Ladrónn is looking to do a take on Superman reminiscent of Jack Kirby's early '70s work on *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen.*

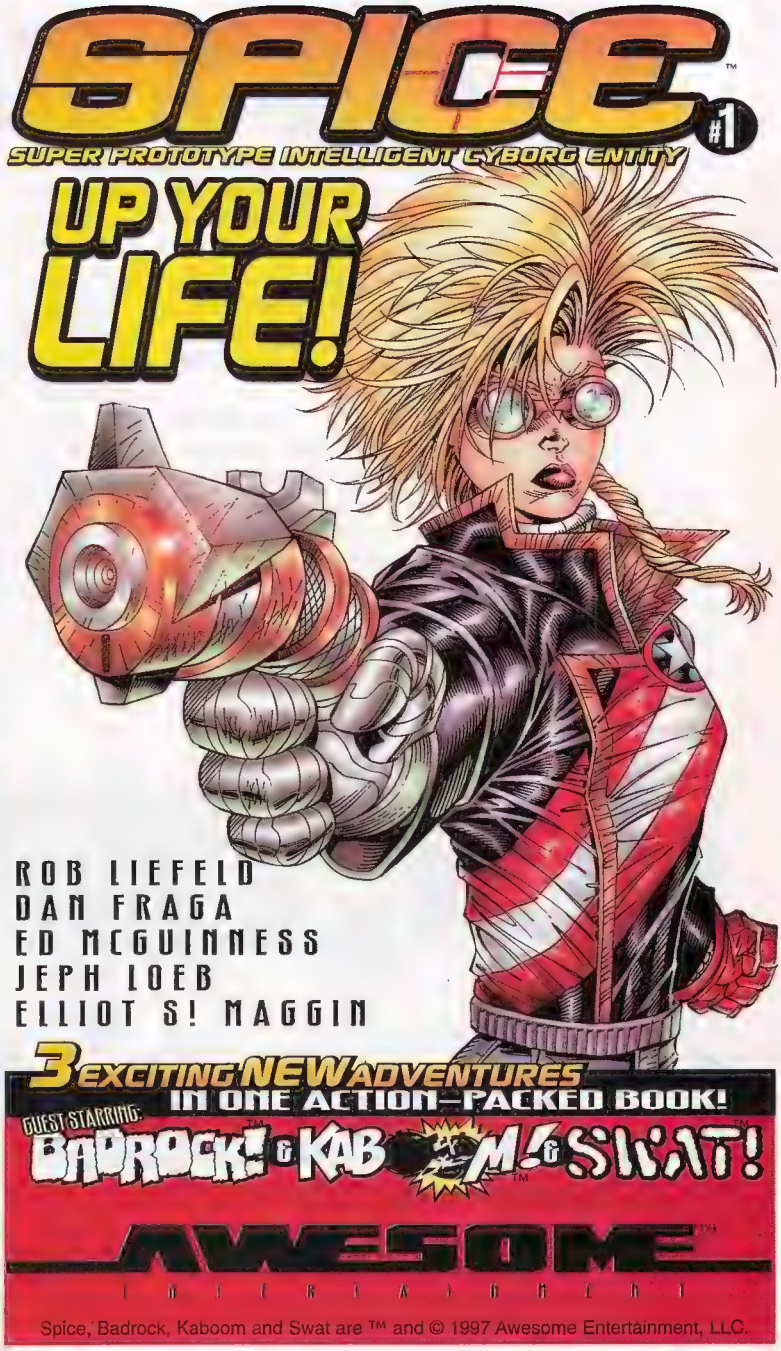
Jim Lee Develops Collectible Card Game

Wizards of the Coast, publishers of the hyper-popular collectible card game *Magic: The Gathering*, are drawing **Jim Lee** and **WildStorm Productions** into their card-flopping fold.

A card game release titled ***C•23*** hits shelves in April, based on a futuristic sci-fi setting developed by WildStorm publisher and fan-favorite artist Jim Lee. An ongoing comic series with the same title written by Brandon Choi (*Gen*[13]) with art by newcomer Alexander Lozano hits the same month. Both the card game and the comic will incorporate story and art from Lee and a number of other WildStorm creators. ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Jim Lee's *C•23* will be done as a card game and a comic.





SHI CRASHES IN VAMPIRELLA'S NEIGHBORHOOD

This summer, fans may wonder where Crusade Entertainment's biggest star, **Shi**, is. The answer? In Harris Comics' ***Vampirella***. But this ain't no usual crossover. Shi stays at Harris for three full months.

June's *Vampirella #7* pulls readers into a story co-starring Japanese warrior Shi. Writer **Mark Millar** said the women team up to track down three parts of a mystical artifact. "This artifact opens up a portal between Earth and Drakulon," he noted, "and if they don't get to the pieces before a group of vampire conspirators do, Earth will be invaded by vampires."

The pair is brought together by a new Harris character named Bishop, a space-time traveler who snags people from different worlds. Millar said that Bishop, who he calls a "human chess piece," has much control over what occurs in this story, titled "Queen's Gambit." The regular *Vampi* art team of Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti preside.

The biting beauty Vampirella is slated to return the cross-continuity favor later this summer, starring with Shi in a still-secret Crusade project. As to the Harris installment's unusual duration, the company's Editorial Director David Bogart said, "Crossovers are fun to do, but you can't do a lot in just 24 pages. With three books, you can have a cool story—it's not just establish-meet-fight-resolve."

Millar already has fun plans for the ladies' meeting: "I like the idea of Shi being such a Christian, and shoving a cross in Vampirella's face, and Vampirella just kind of looking at it and laughing." Vampi isn't vulnerable to crosses, holy water or sunlight—something Millar noted he and his co-writer **Grant Morrison** plan to explain in *Vampirella* before Morrison stops scripting the title with May's #6. ■ *Marc Wilkofsky*

Classic Supes Costume Returns in April

It's been said that clothes make the man. And this April 1st—no foolin'—it's time for **Superman** to prove that maxim when he trades in his electric outfit powers for his classic duds and powers in an 84-page, $5.95 one-shot special titled ***Superman Forever***.

Similar in format to *Superman: The Wedding Album*, *Superman Forever* is plotted by *Adventures of Superman* writer **Karl Kesel**, and features all the creators from the Superman books, along with some returning guests like *Superman: The Man of Steel* writer/artist **John Byrne**. Famed painter **Alex Ross** (*Kingdom Come*) provides the cover.

"*Superman Forever* is about two things," *Superman* writer **Dan Jurgens** said. "First, the triumphant return of the one, true, ultimate Superman. Second, it serves as a kickoff of the 60th anniversary of Superman, and I can't think of a better way to do it than to return him to his classic look and the elements that are best recognized with the character."

The fact that Superman turns 60 this year is something that weighed heavily on Kesel's mind as he plotted. "Let's face it—it would be sacrilege for him not to be wearing the traditional outfit and have bullets bouncing off of him for his birthday," Kesel said. "The story itself is just a classic Superman story. That's the best way to describe it. It really strikes me like an episode of the old George Reeves 'Superman' TV series in that all the classic Superman elements are there: the enemies, the change between Clark and Superman, and of course, the heroics of the big guy."

The entire Super-team is tight-lipped about the process that brings Superman back to his "normal" self, although Jurgens did hint that, "we find out that there's a mysterious background presence that's been keying events in Superman books for months. Things are brought to a head here and this presence helps bring about the transformation."

As a major bonus, *Superman Forever* will be graced by a Ross painted cover, featuring lenticular "motion" effects. When the book is held and moved slightly, the painting on the cover will show a near-animation of Clark Kent changing into Superman, and then flying away. For the cover, Ross had to paint seven pictures instead of one. "This is as close as I'll ever get to animation," Ross said. "It was different from anything else I've done, because the seven pictures had to have a real feel of continuity between them, and more subtle elements such as the lighting had to remain the same throughout."

The image of Superman that Ross is choosing to portray? "It's going to be *my* version of Superman," Ross said. "He's going to be the *Kingdom Come* Superman, minus the gray at the temples."

There's no doubt *Superman Forever* is a project that all the Superman creators are proud of. "We've got a classic story and a tremendous collection of creators involved. It's the best way possible to bring him back," Kesel said. "*Superman Forever* will be a perfect jumping on point for new readers, a milestone for current readers, and most of all, a celebration of Superman, the first and best superhero." ■ *Matthew Brady*

Supes gets his old duds in April's one-shot with a special "motion" cover by Alex Ross (sketch shown above).

Comic Stars Appear on 'Kingdom Come' Audio

"We've got a special request from **Mark Waid**," announced Kevin Thompsen to a tiny, crowded recording studio. "I say we let him do it."

Thompsen is the producer of "**Kingdom Come Audio**," the books-on-tape version of comics' acclaimed *Kingdom Come*. In the *KC* comic, Waid was the writer. But in the audio version, he holds only the lofty title of "Bystander #3." Waid provides one of the many comic-star guest voices for this audio dramatization, joining DC writers and editors like Mike Carlin, Denny O'Neil and Dan Raspler. **Alex Ross**, *KC* co-creator and painter, unfortunately couldn't make any of the scheduled tapings.

The two-hour, two-cassette set available in comic stores and bookstore in March carries a $17 suggested retail price. What'd Waid get out of this? Exactly $1, the "talent fee" paid to all the guest voices and the granting of his special request and childhood wish as he got to say—on tape and for the record—"Look! Up in the sky!" ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Comic stars like Denny O'Neil (above) and Mark Waid (left) lent their voices for "Kingdom Come Audio."

Cover reproduction of ***Alpha Flight #9***.
Scott Clark and Chris Carlson. Inspired by the first chapter of the X-Men/Alpha Flight crossover written by Steven T. Seagle. (February, 1998)

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Marvel Dumps Lobdell, Taps Claremont for FF

Marvel Comics has announced that popular writer **Scott Lobdell** has been fired from ***Fantastic Four***, citing "creative differences." Lobdell finished his run on *FF* with plots for issues #4 and #5, which regular *FF* penciler Salvador Larroca has drawn. Former *Uncanny X-Men* writer **Chris Claremont** will script *Fantastic Four* #4-#5, and is to become the book's regular writer with issue #6.

"Scott wanted to go in different directions and he expressed a desire to do other projects. We really wanted someone to dedicate their time to *FF*," said Marvel Editor-in-Chief **Bob Harras**. "And Chris was willing, able and excited to go there."

Lobdell was none too pleased with his *Fantastic Four* departure. "This is exactly what [Marvel] did to me with *Uncanny X-Men* #350," said Lobdell, citing his last issue of that title, which incoming writer Steven T. Seagle wrote from a Lobdell plot springboard. "I wanted to do 50 issues of *FF*, but I guess they didn't want me."

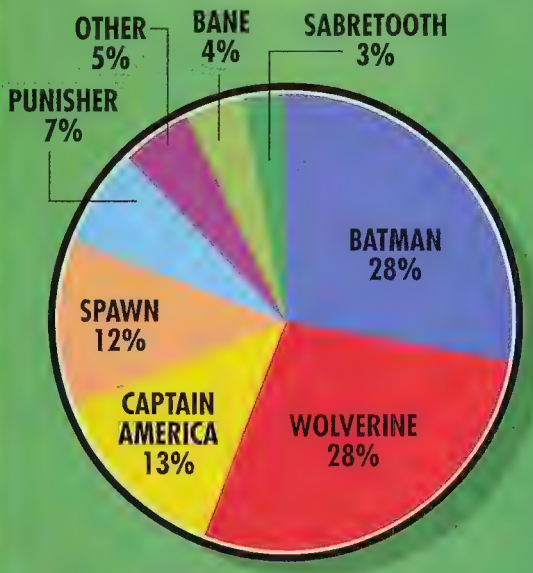
Meanwhile, since Lobdell is still under contract with Marvel, the publisher has shifted Lobdell to *Daredevil* to write a four-issue story arc beginning with issue #376. Despite ill-will concerning *Fantastic Four*, Lobdell is looking forward to tackling *Daredevil*. Lobdell's story features Matt Murdock working undercover for S.H.I.E.L.D. in France.

After the *Daredevil* run, what's next for Lobdell? Lobdell has been rumored to write a host of projects outside of Marvel when his contract expires including a relaunch of WildStorm's *WildC.A.T.s* and Awesome Entertainment's superteam *The Allies*. "When his contract [is] up, I'd love for him to do stuff at WildStorm," said WildStorm Publisher Jim Lee.

"Who knows what's next?" said Lobdell. "One never knows in this business." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

READER POLL

WHAT COMIC CHARACTER WOULD YOU WANT AT YOUR SIDE IN A NO-RULES STREET BRAWL?



Through a poll conducted on our forum on America Online (Keyword: Wizard), it was a *tie* (!) between Batman and Wolverine as to which comic character would be the best bet to get you outta a bad situation alive. "Wolverine is the most vicious guy there is," said one respondent. "He's feral and would fight to the death."

Wolvie had his supporters, as did Gotham City's defender. "Wolverine's cool, but that's Batman's turf," argued one Batfan. "He's the master of the alley fight. The bad guys would be down for the count inside of two seconds." ■ *Victor "Slappy" Tayback*

Klingon Invades Marvel Comics

Marvel Comics are already translated into a dozen languages for world distribution. Chalk up a new one: Klingon.

March's ***Star Trek: Starfleet Academy*** #18 features a treat for the hardest of hardcore Trekkers: The universe's first all-Klingon language comic. "Strictly writer Chris Cooper's idea!" exclaimed editor Bobbie Chase. "He thought readers would really get a kick out of it."

All text and word balloons in the comic are in the Klingon language laid down by Marc Okrand in his book, ***The Klingon Dictionary***. Chase said that dialogue will be "a bit simplified to aid in translation," and a two-page glossary in the back helps readers who don't have Okrand's book. The linguistically weak? They can wait two weeks after the Klingon release for the shipment of a regular, all-English version.

But will the comic ring true to Klingon fans? "Definitely," promised Chase. "We take these things very seriously and Paramount is there every step of the way to make sure we get it right." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

we LOOKED it up

Shi'•ar (SHE är), proper noun. prehistory-present; 1. ancient extraterrestrial race who show up frequently in X-Men comics and have forged a massive galaxy-wide empire presided over by Empress Lilandra 2. the name of the galaxy from which the Shi'ar race hail 3. how Billy Tucci answers the question, "Is Shi Japanese?"

Cover reproduction of ***Fantastic Four #4***.
Pencil and ink art by Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert. Inspired by the first chapter of the Fantastic Four/Silver Surfer crossover by Scott Lobdell. (February, 1998)

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Grecian Formula

Everyone knows writer **Grant Morrison** planned the 14-member **JLA** lineup to parallel the pantheon of Greek gods. But without a degree in ancient cultures, how do you figure out just who's who?

We learned who matches up with who, along with the lowdown on how all of 'em will be able to fit into 22 pages every month.

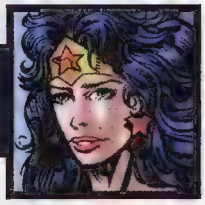
"The main seven characters [the first six listed below, plus Martian Manhunter] will be there every issue," Morrison said. "I want to keep the focus on the seven, but the others will be there to give the feel of a huge, international organization that has specialists in every part of the globe."

Morrison said that the Manhunter will have an advisory role, while the 14th member will be a rotating specialist who will add his/her talents to any particular adventure.

And with two New Gods to the line-up, Morrison gave a strong hint as to where his tenure on *JLA* is ultimately headed. "The New Gods know that something very bad is coming Earth's way soon, which will be my big finale in *JLA* #30 or so, a few years down the road. So they send Orion and Barda there to help protect the Earth."

Without further ado: Here are your JLA/Greek god matchups, with commentary from Morrison. ■ *Matthew Brady*

Superman (Zeus)
"Obviously, he's Zeus in the sense that he's the leader, and the father figure of the gods."



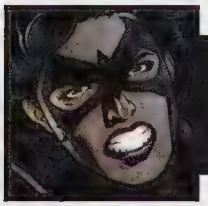
Wonder Woman (Hera)
"While she isn't Superman's [Zeus'] wife as she was in Greek myth, she is nearly his equal in terms of strength and respect."

Flash (Hermes)
"The speedster and messenger of the gods. He was a pretty easy fit with the Greek pantheon."

Batman (Hades)
"He fills the role of the lord of the underworld. It allows us to keep him on Earth more, rather than on the Watchtower, which is in the 'heavens.' He's the dark god connected to the underworld."

Green Lantern (Apollo)
"The young god of light. Again, like the Flash, this was an easy one to fit in, and it ties in pretty well with Kyle's powers and place on the team."

Aquaman (Poseidon)
"He's a basic one. Aquaman is king of the seas and lord of all the oceans in a figurative and literal sense. I want to use him a lot more, so we'll see him in the Watchtower a lot more often as he becomes a major player in the league."

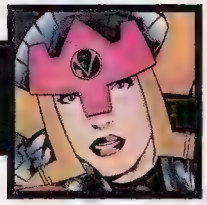


Huntress (Artemis)
"She replaces Green Arrow, who left because he just wasn't ready for the challenges of the League. Artemis was the hunter of the Greek gods, so Huntress fits the bill."

Zauriel (Eros)
"The beautiful, winged angel. Who better to fit the role of the god of love?"

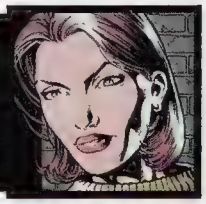
Steel (Hephaestus)
"The technician and forge of the gods. Steel fits that role really well. He's one of the most innovative inventors on Earth, so he fit that role perfectly."

Orion (Ares)
"The right fit for the god of war. The son of Darkseid is the ultimate warrior. He was told to join the JLA by Highfather, but he doesn't want the job. He hates Earth, so they've sent Barda along to keep him in line."



Big Barda (Demeter)
"The mother figure of the gods. Physically, and by acting as Orion's 'keeper,' she plays a great mother figure."

Plastic Man (Dionysus)
"He was the shapeshifting god who was always chasing women and out for having a good time: a role that's perfect for Plastic Man."



Oracle (Athena)
"Oracle will be the League's non-active, Earthbound computer link and telepathic backup, filling the role of the goddess of wisdom. I liked the idea of Oracle getting her hands on New Gods technology and seeing what she can do with that."

Martian Manhunter (advisor)
He'll be on the sidelines. "He's not strictly on the team anymore. He'll be taking an advisory capacity. He wants to put more effort into becoming the superhero for the southern hemisphere, which is what he's been becoming. I'd like to see him get a series of his own soon."

Art reproduction of ***Spider-Man "Identity Crisis"*** crossover running through Sensational Spider-Man #27; Amazing Spider-Man #434; Peter Parker, Spider-Man #91; and Spectacular Spider-Man #257. Pencil and Ink art by Mike Wieringo, Richard Case, Tom Lyle, Bud LaRosa, John Romita Jr., Scott Hanna, Luke Ross and Dan Green. Inspired by the story written by Todd Dezago, Tom DeFalco, Howard Mackie and J.M. DeMatteis. (February, 1998)

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Anti-Green Lantern Fans Sling Expensive Campaign

Got a few thousand dollars to blow on your favorite comic character? *Green Lantern* writer **Ron Marz** and **Green Lantern** fan Jack Grimes have decidedly different views on the best to spend that money.

Grimes represents a group of fans called H.E.A.T. (**H**al's **E**merald **A**ttack **T**eam) who want to restore the Silver Age character of Hal Jordan as DC's Green Lantern. Hal was replaced by Kyle Rayner in 1994's **"Emerald Twilight,"** a Marz-written story that ran in *Green Lantern* #48-#50. As *Green Lantern* approaches issue #100, Hal fans still bear the scars of the comic story, a fact that puzzles Marz. "Nobody is making people read *Green Lantern* if they don't want to. It's been four years. Maybe they should stop making themselves crazy."

Grimes said he and his group are anything but crazy and, in fact, represent grass-roots activism at its best. "*Green Lantern* is broke and hasn't been fixed yet," Grimes contends. "Spider-Man fans got Peter Parker back after the 'clone' story. Batman was broken and the fans' will fixed it. We hope that someday, every Green Lantern fan can be happy again."

Grimes' plan for happiness calls for "peaceful coexistence" between the Kyle and Hal characters, the resurrection of Hal—who was killed in 1996's *Parallax: Emerald Night* one-shot—and Hal's restoration in the now-defunct Green Lantern Corps. H.E.A.T.'s goals also call for Marz's dismissal as *GL* writer. "I honestly have to say I don't like Marz's work on *Green Lantern*," Grimes said. "I don't want to see him unemployed, but I would like to see someone else take the reins."

Marz tries not to take this personally, and replies that writing comics, "is my livelihood and I take great pride in it. But it's not my world. It's not my whole life. Other things matter more."

Marz feels the group's money would be better spent on charities, rather than an anti-Green Lantern campaign. Anyway, what's done is done.

"Hal Jordan is dead," Marz concluded. "Let him rest in peace." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Is Green Lantern Hal Jordan's dirtnap permanent? Not if the fan group H.E.A.T. has anything to say about it.

DOUBLE TAKES

Wanna get into comics? The key may be…pie? It worked for two comic fan brothers, Jim and Mike Smith.

Thunderbolts #9 contained a full-page goof on the old Hostess Fruit Pie ads that ran in many comics in the late '70s. The piece was the brainchild of the Smiths, who worked up the fun ad and presented it to *Thunderbolts* writer Kurt Busiek at a convention. "Kurt sent me the piece," said *Thunderbolts* editor Tom Brevoort, "and it was so funny we had to run it." Brevoort said the piece was a tad crude artistically, so he had it redrawn by pro artists James Fry and Arne Starr. "But the script was right on," Brevoort said. "I think I might have changed maybe one word."

For their efforts, the Smiths got paid what Brevoort called "a standard one-page writer's fee for beginners and just 'cause we're such fun-loving guys, we gave 'em the original art, too."

No word on what the Smith brothers' next project will be.

Cover reproduction of ***Heroes For Hire #10***.
Pencil and ink art by Pascual Ferry and Jamie Mendoza.
Inspired by the story written by John Ostrander.
(February, 1998)

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Starlin Returns to Comics With 'Cops in Space'

Jim Starlin returns to writing and drawing comics in the epic space-opera style for which he's known this May with the six-issue ***Hardcore Station*** mini-series from DC Comics.

"It's cops in space," Starlin said. "Hardcore Station is a huge space station somewhere between the planets Apokolips, Rann and Earth. The station is headed by Chief Justice Max, who's not your normal, altruistic good guy." Max and the station are confronted by a towering menace with power in the same league as Darkseid called Synnar. As Synnar's aims become clear, Max realizes he needs help, and calls in the JLA, who guest-star in the final three issues of the series.

While he may have been out of the comic loop for a time, Starlin is playing the game with all the savvy of a current pro: Hardcore Station is creator-owned, giving Starlin near-complete creative control over its characters and situations. "As I understand it, the deal I have is similar to **Chris Claremont**'s deal with *Sovereign Seven*," Starlin said. "While *Hardcore Station* and the characters are mine, it's set in the DC Universe, so there's someone from the DCU at least appearing in every issue."

And if the six-issue series goes over well with readers, Starlin's all set with *another* 12 issues of *Hardcore Station*. "I've got a continuation all planned out," Starlin said. "Altogether, it's an 18-issue story. Issue six ends at a very good stopping point, and no one will complain that they missed out on any story, but if sales warrant, the whole 18 issues will come out, as two more six-issue mini-series. My fingers are crossed." ■ *Matthew Brady*

The Naked Truth: Nude Covers Are Out

No nudes is good nudes. At least that's what the recent decline in comics featuring women baring all on comic book covers seems to suggest.

Lightning Comics announced recently it will no longer produce adult covers. Its last "nude variant" shipped last October. **London Night Studios** followed suit in December. Reason? "We can take nude editions only so far before we get major backlash from the fans and retailers," explained LNS writer Fred Cooper. "Enough is enough."

The eye-catching gimmick was first seen back in 1994, when LNS published *Poizon: Lost Child #0*. "The sales were great," explained Cooper. "We began to offer more nude covers, simply because our customers demanded it."

Other publishers soon followed. Lightning Comics jumped on the bandwagon with *Hellina: Taking Back the Night #1*. But oversaturation (and the frightening possibility of seeing Wolverine's furry butt) led to a quick downward spiral.

"Nude variant covers sold really well initially because of their novelty," said Lightning Publisher Steve Zyskowski. "Eventually the novelty wore off, essentially due to over saturation, but also due to time."

Lightning attempted gimmicks including the innovative acetate lift-off-costume covers. "Many publishers just threw a nude chick on their cover," said Zyskowski. "Our covers were pieces of art. They weren't trashy. We tried to go along the lines of *Playboy* while other publishers followed in the vein of *Hustler*."

And like any cycle, what's old now may seem nubile again. "I think collectors will look back in time at the comics industry and remember the 'era' of nude covers and try to collect them," Zyskowski said. "I can see a future market for them."

No nudes, good nudes.

But for now, it looks like occasional swimsuit issues (and imagination) will have to do. ■ *Jake Rossen*

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

TODD ONLINE!

Photo: Al Ortiga

Remember the Todd McFarlane Q & A from *Wizard #77*? Now, read the REST of the interview on Wizard World Online's new website. *Wizard* magazine published only 3,500 words, but this is a whopping 7,500 words of pure, unedited Todd! You won't believe what he has to say!

EXCLUSIVELY on Wizard World. On America Online, go to Keyword: WIZARD.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

MARCH 10 (Tuesday)

- **LEN KAMINSKI AND SAL VELLUTO CHAT**

The creative team behind Acclaim's controversial *Bloodshot* series answers your questions about the future of the character.
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

MARCH 16 (Monday)

- **BREAKING IN CHAT**

Learn how to get into comics now!
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

MARCH 24 (Tuesday)

- **TIM TOWNSEND**

Uncanny X-Men inker Tim Townsend gives the lowdown dirt on working on Marvel's flagship X-book!
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

MARCH 31 (Tuesday)

- **ERIK LARSEN**

Controversial and colorful *Savage Dragon* writer/artist Erik Larsen joins us to discuss his online "EGO" column which appears for the entire month of March. As a fan and as a pro, Erik pulls no punches. Be prepared!
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats.

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

Cover reproduction of ***The Avengers #3***.
Pencil and Ink Artwork by George Pérez and Al Vey.
Inspired by story written by Kurt Busiek.
(March, 1998)

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ABSTRACT STUDIO
March's ***Strangers in Paradise*** #13 begins a three-issue story arc where readers get to see Francine and Katchoo back in their high-school days.

ACCLAIM COMICS
Turok goes monthly in March, courtesy of writer **Fabian Nicieza** and artist Rafael Kayanan.

ANTARCTIC PRESS
In March, ***Shotgun Mary*** becomes monthly, with a full-color series and a brand-new toy.

ALTERNATIVE PRESS
James Kochalka will publish a series of new projects in 1998, including the one-shot *Memoirs* in April, the quarterly *Triple Dare!* with cartoonists Tom Hart and Jon Lewis starting in May, and the graphic novel *Quit Your Job* in June.

ARCHIE COMICS
February's ***Betty*** #61 has Betty magically transported to historical Riverdale, where she saves a young boy's life.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT
The android girl S.P.I.C.E. from *Fighting American* takes center stage in March's *S.P.I.C.E.* one-shot from Rob Liefeld, **Jeph Loeb** and Dan Fraga.

CHAOS! COMICS
March sees the release of ***Lady Death:*** *Dragon Wars*, an untold tale from 200 years into Lady Death's past.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
In March, ***Shi:*** *Black, White & Red* #1 pits the warrior against the evil chameleon-like monster Hengeyokai. The special two-issue series adds red accents and effects to black-and-white art by J.G. Jones.

DARK HORSE COMICS
From outta the murky pages of Hellboy comes March's *Abe Sapien: Drums of the Dead* one-shot, which includes a 10-page Hellboy back up by **Mike Mignola**. Too cool! The four-issue *Hoax: The Gathering—Initiation*, beginning in March, brings the popular collectible card game back to comics with a story by **Mike Grell** and Pop Mhan.

DC COMICS
Artist **Ethan Van Sciver** (*Cyberfrog*) jumps to DC, where he will pencil a fill-in issue of *Impulse* and work on an upcoming *Wonder Girl* mini-series. Writer **Howard Chaykin** and artist Don Brereton reunite on February's *Thrillkillers* #2, the sequel to their 1996 "Elseworlds" mini-series.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
World-renowned artist **Robert Crumb** is the focus of the autumn release of *Tom Vigor he Life Angelic: The Robert Crumb Letters 1956–1972*. This 256-page tome, due in March, is a rare and disturbing glimpse into the mind of comics' first alternative press celebrity....**Charles Burns** moves his disturbing vision of horror, *Black Hole*, to Fantagraphics in March.

HARRIS COMICS
Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn (*The Flash*) are writing a team-up between Harris' Vampirella and Event's Painkiller Jane. The one-shot comic hits in May.

IMAGE COMICS
• HIGHROW
After seven years, a Knight finally tries to slay the Dragon. Dread Knight tussles with the Dragon in March's *Savage Dragon* #47. **Erik Larsen** writes, pencils and inks.

• TODD MCFARLANE PRODUCTIONS
April's ***Curse of the Spawn*** #20 features the "Cursed Signatures Promotion." Readers can pick up a copy of *CoS* #20, send in their receipt along with their (and their comic shop's) name, address and phone number, and they and their local shop will receive an autograph from one of the title's creators. Check future issues of *Curse* for more details.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
Zombie fans rejoice! This March, WildStorm releases the ***Resident Evil Comic Book***, a 56-page magazine for fans of the popular Capcom video game. Besides three comic stories and interviews, this puppy sports a foil-fx cover!...Scott Dunbier has replaced Jim Lee as editor-in-chief of WildStorm, freeing up Lee to spend more time on ***Divine Right***.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
The *Watchmen* team of **Alan Moore** and Dave Gibbons writes and draws the oft-delayed *The Spirit: The New Adventures* #1, which finally sees print in March.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS
LNS previews its major 1998 crossover in February's ***The Crow/Razor:*** *Kill the Pain Tour Book*, which spotlights the creative team, presents exclusive artwork and is limited to 5,000 copies.

MARVEL COMICS
A dedication: The Spider-Man "Identity Crisis" character called Dusk, first shown in *Venom* #78, will now be known as Dusk....Deadpool, Marvel's merry motor-mouthed mercenary, makes a guest appearance in February's *Heroes for Hire* #10....Closer: *Daredevil* writer **Ann Nocenti** scripts the February *Ka-Zar & Daredevil Annual*....March sees ***Seeker 3000***, the first title in a new Marvel sci-fi line.

NEW ENGLAND COMICS
Eli Stone delivers another installment of *The Tick: Big Blue Destiny* with issue #4 in March.

PENTHOUSE COMIX
Mark Beachum's Lamina highlights the cover of March's ***Penthouse Comix*** #31.

SHARKBAIT PRESS
Pete the P.O'd Postal Worker #3, featuring a story entitled "Pete Delivers to Roswell," will hit stands in March.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Tears of Dawn Vol. 2 is a 32-page fully painted pin-up book by **Joseph Michael Linsner** in a limited edition of 7,500 copies. The March-shipping book has an $18 retail price.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
March's ***Skeleton Key*** *Trade Paperback Vol. 3* reprints issue #19–#24 of the cult classic.

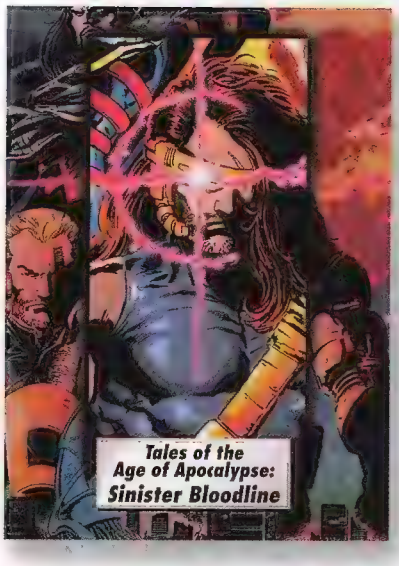
SOUTH JERSEY REBELLION PRODUCTIONS
Jersey Devil #5 ships in February and features—No joke!—the story of real-life highway bandits in New Jersey.

TOPPS COMICS
Tom and Mary Bierbaum (*Legionnaires*) write a three-issue X-Men mini-series entitled *Orphans* debuting in March. Issue #1 is available with a photo cover or an Adam Hughes-drawn cover.

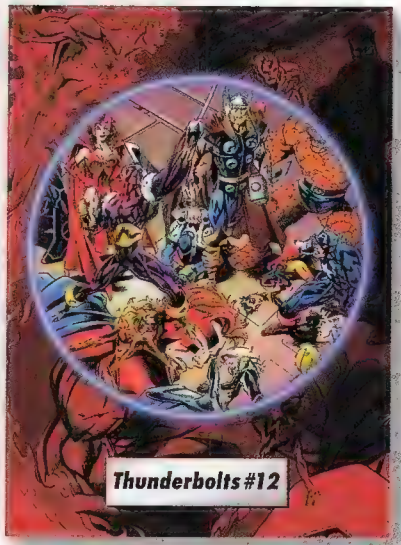
2-D GRAPHICS
Captain Awareness: Assault on Campus is the premiere issue in 2-D's series geared toward promoting awareness of issues that affect whole life. Informative and back dealing with sexual assault is approved by organizations like the National Organization for Women, and features art by Dan Jurgens, **George Pérez** and Norm Breyfogle.

VANGUARD PRODUCTIONS
The Al Williamson Sketchbook is a March release 100-page paperback showcasing 50 years of art from the comic legend.

VIZ COMICS
Dragon Ball, Japan's most popular manga title, is coming to America in March. *Dragon Ball* and *Dragon Ball Z: The Super Saiyans* are slated to run 12 and nine issues respectively, and will read from right-to-left, as is the style with manga. W


Tales of the Age of Apocalypse: Sinister Bloodline

Fantastic Four #4


Thunderbolts #12

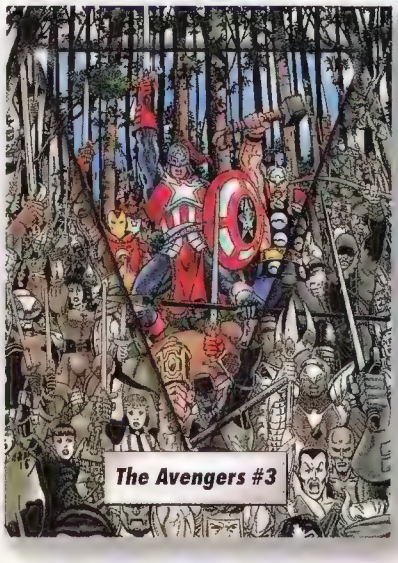
Heroes For Hire #10

MARVEL® COMICS

"MODERN DAY MASTERPIECES"
- Stan Lee

Spider-Man "Identity Crises"

Uncanny X-Men #353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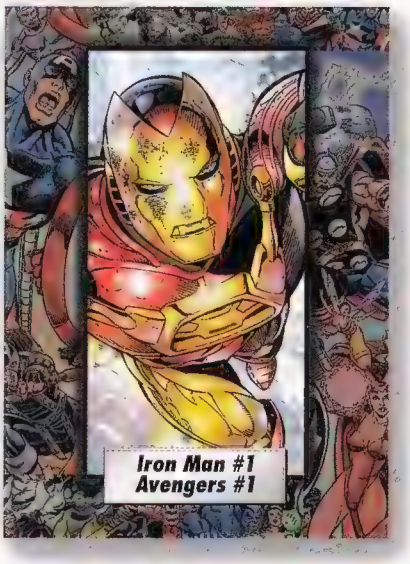
Iron Man #1
Avengers #1

BELIEVE IN THE IMPOSSIBLE

www.marvel.com or AOL at keyword: marvel

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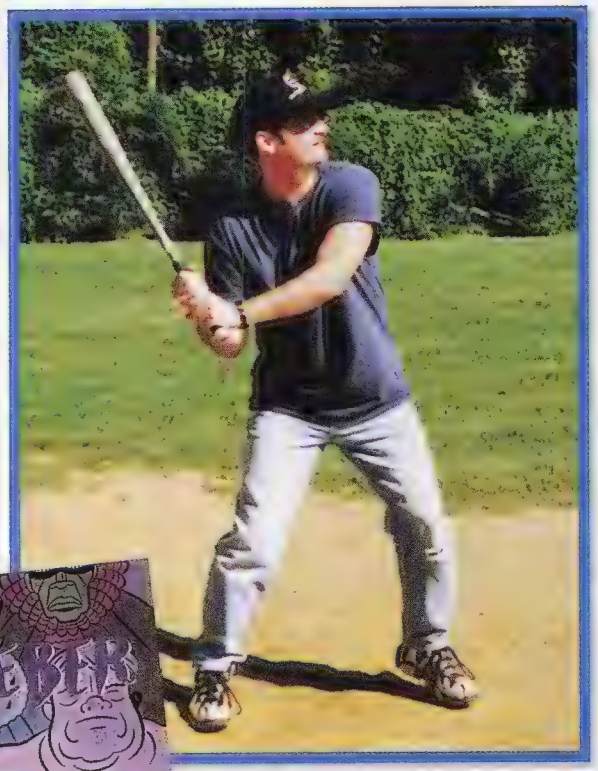
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Jeff Smith is the king of the small press. His self-published comic, *Bone*, is one of the best-known independent comics on the racks and has garnered raves from across the industry. Surprisingly, Smith takes this all in stride. Success has definitely *not* gone to his head.

Case in point: How many industry bigwigs would even consider going to something called the Small Press Expo? After hitting it big, many creators might think they were slumming at a convention that isn't a Chicago ComiCon or San Diego Comic Con. Not Smith. He wears his status as a "small press" creator like a badge of honor.

Granted, this isn't your typical comic convention. Taking place in the Washington D.C. suburb of Silver Spring, Md., there are no dealers at the SPX, no big flashy company displays. It's just a whole mess of artists and writers ready to meet and greet their fans. Approximately 1,000 people showed up to see Smith and 200 small-press stalwarts like Colleen Doran, Dave Sim, Charles Vess, Jason Lutes, Joe Matt and Scott McCloud. *Wizard* was there too. Even though we're not a small press star, we tagged along to see exactly what it's like to be Jeff Smith, at least for a weekend.



Above: Star left fielder Jeff Smith gets ready to show why he's a *comic* artist. At left: This Marvel parody is recommended to Smith as a must-read.

Friday, September 19, 1997

7 p.m.

In honor of old-time cartoonists like his idol Walt Kelly (*Pogo*), Smith gives a "chalk talk"—a public instructional drawing class that Kelly had often done. Smith takes the stage (actually a small platform in the corner of a large meeting room) with marker in hand, ready to doodle on a giant sketchpad. Unfortunately, due to some strange planning, the chalk talk runs at the same time as the opening night reception, so the "talk" part of the presentation is drowned out by various party noises. Still, a sizable number of fans crowd around Smith as he scribbles the Bone cousins on the huge sketchpad, describing where he gets his inspiration from. Afterwards, Smith remarks, "I felt like a stand-up comedian. I'm not sure if everybody got what I was doing, but I think I reached a few fans."

Saturday, September 20

10:30 a.m.

The convention starts slowly, and the fans haven't located Smith's table yet. "Sounds like a good chance to grab breakfast," he says, unloading a stack of *Bone* hardcovers at his table. Being a well-known cartoonist has its advantages, and this is one of them—it's not hard for Smith to find breakfast companions.

Smith, along with the gang from The Million Year Picnic, one of Boston's biggest independent-comic-friendly comic shops, heads outside to a diner. Downing a plate of bacon and scrambled eggs, Smith picks the Picnic staff's collective brain for up-and-coming cartoonists: "You really oughta pick up *Coober Skeber*," says one of the staff. This anthology stirred up a lot of buzz at the San Diego Comic Con because it featured a number of mini-comic and alternative cartoonists doing unauthorized and totally bizarre rip-offs of Marvel characters. Smith is intrigued, and makes it his first priority to hunt down a copy.

Noon

Back at the con, Smith is comfortably plopped at the Cartoon Books table, signing away. The fans have tracked him down, and he's working on a line of people that never seems to end. He shakes hands

with each person in line and makes a point to get the name of every fan who comes to the table. When he's presented with a hardcover *Bone* collection to sign, he always doodles a small, personalized sketch.

All this is in sharp contrast to most artists, who make it appear as if they're being held at gunpoint to stay at their table. Funny thing is, fan attention is just natural to Smith. "A lot of people comment about my 'convention attitude,' but I don't know how you could do it any other way," he says to one inquisitive fan, taking a second to look up from a sketch of Thorn and Bone. "You guys made *Bone* what it is. I wouldn't be here without you."

All photos courtesy of Small Press Expo

Fans line up to get a handshake and a sketch from Smith (above) while Charles Vess (below, left) personalizes things for his fans.

1:30 p.m.

All through the day, fans come by Smith's table and drop off self-published comics, ranging from photocopied mini-comics to professional-quality stuff. Rookie creator Rick Henn presents Smith with ashcans for the first two issues of *Time Spell*, his venture into self-publishing. "You're the inspiration for me to do this," Henn says, handing his comics to Smith. "If I hadn't read *Bone*, I don't think I would be going ahead with this."

Smith adds the comics to an already sizable stack of reading material. "Man, it's rough out there!" he cautions. "It's a lot different from when I started, so you're going to have to tough it out if you want to succeed, no matter how good your book is."

2:30 p.m.

Smith takes a break from the table to wander around the Expo and check out some of the other artists, but before he can even get two feet from the table, he's intercepted by Mark Askwith, a journalist from a Canadian sci-fi TV station called Space: The Imagination Station. Askwith and his cameraman lead Smith to a nearby park for a quick interview under the shade of a tree. The unseasonably warm air and sunny weather must be a relief to Smith, as he comes alive once the camera rolls. He gleefully and animatedly answers every question, a few of which are of the requisite "What is *Bone* about?" variety that he's surely answered 1,000 times before. He sticks his face in the camera, talks with his hands and never gives a dry answer. "Wow, you're such a natural," Askwith remarks afterwards. "Yeah, maybe I missed my calling," Smith replies with a laugh.

3:50 p.m.

Back at the table, Smith chats with fans, while a middle-aged Bone fan stops by with his daughter. He grabs Smith's attention and politely asks if his daughter can stand behind the table to watch Smith sketch. "Of course," he says. "You didn't even have to ask." The girl, whose name is Cindy, can't be any more than five years old and is barely able to peek over the table. She stands silently to Smith's left, her eyes as wide as saucers as she stares at his sketching hand, almost until the show ends at five.

Sunday, September 21

3 p.m.

After the convention hubbub is over, the fun still continues. At a nearby baseball field, Smith (starting in left field) and a handful of other cartoonists take on Diamond Distribution's softball team in a knock-down, drag-out game. Much to everybody's surprise, the SPX gang pulls out a 13-8 victory. Not bad for a bunch of cranky artists who've never played together before.

Once the game's over, it's time to fire up a nice, big, juicy roast pig—something of a tradition at the Expo. For Smith, this is just the end to a truly great weekend. "This has honestly been one of the best shows I've been to. Ever," Smith says afterwards. "I know they're planning next year's show, and man, I'm already there!" ■ *Tom Palmer Jr.*

FATHOM

'WITCHBLADE' SUPERSTAR MICHAEL TURNER DIVES INTO A NEW CREATOR-OWNED PROJECT

Michael Turner is ready for a new challenge. "I've been working on this for a year-and-a-half," says the popular *Witchblade* artist. "I had the first issue written seven months ago. After every *Witchblade* deadline was finished, I'd do just a little bit on this. Now it's showtime."

What's Turner showing? Why, just his new creator-owned title and character, *Fathom*, debuting in August. "She's got water-based abilities and background," he says, "but I guarantee she ain't just a female Aquaman."

It seems a girl named Aspen was found washed up on a beach at age 11 with no memory of her past. She's since grown into a marine biologist who gets invited to a high-tech underwater lab to help research a mystery-shrouded underwater race. "At this point, of course," Turner says, "all hell breaks loose. Her past catches up to her quickly. She discovers she has powers and discovers that she's not exactly...normal, and she has to cope with that."

From there, Turner promises numerous twists that will take a while to be drawn out. "It's similar to 'The X-Files.' I'm a fan of the show and I think the appeal is that they only reveal small bits and pieces each time. *Fathom* is a big story, too. Hints will be dropped constantly, but slowly. There will never be a dull moment."

And Turner's career is anything but dull at the moment, as *Fathom* marks his first stab at creator-ownership, and at full-time writing. "I'm writing because I have to grow as a creator. This is a cool story I've had in my head for a long time, and I'm going to write it."

Which *doesn't* mean Turner will be abandoning the book that vaulted him to stardom—he still plans on penciling two or three issues of *Witchblade* a year. "I'm still very involved in *Witchblade*," he says. "I'll be helping on plots and penciling key issues like #25. I'm addicted to work. I don't think I'd be happy if I wasn't swamped. And I'm not going to ditch the book where I started."

Still, Turner has a new story to tell, "and *Fathom* is it," he says. "*Witchblade* is still my baby. I'm just gonna have another baby." W

Jim McLauchlin ain't nobody's baby. Well, maybe Carly Simon's, but that's another story entirely.

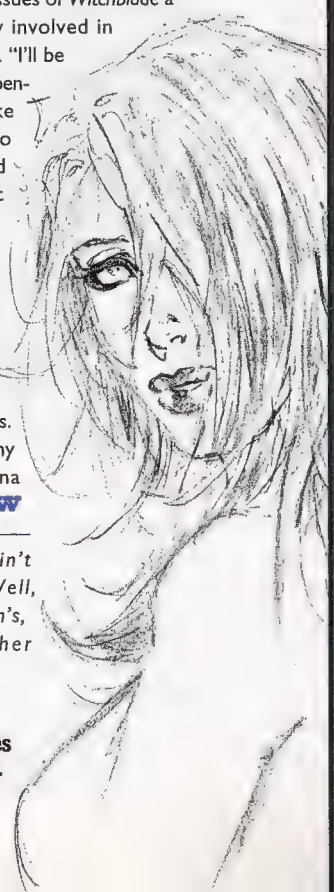
BY JIM McLAUCHLIN

VITAL STATS

WHO?
A mysterious and beautiful woman named Aspen, with water-based powers and a past she's trying to piece together

WHAT?
Fathom, an ongoing monthly debuting at Top Cow Productions in August

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Artist Michael Turner's career expands as he takes on both full-time writing and creator-ownership in this new series.



Meet Aspen, a marine biologist with water-based abilities and a secret past. "She ain't just a female Aquaman," says Turner.

MICHAEL TURNER
JOE WEEMS
JD SMITH
1997

The HOLE Story

By James Busbee • Photos by Paul Schiraldi

Set in a donut shop, 'Holey Crullers' twists familiar superhero conventions by dealing with offbeat questions fanboys really want answered

There are questions Marvel and DC Comics will never answer.

For example: Does Batman chafe under the Batsuit? Does our sun amplify Superman's body odor to toxic levels? Where does Spider-Man answer nature's call when he's swinging above Manhattan?

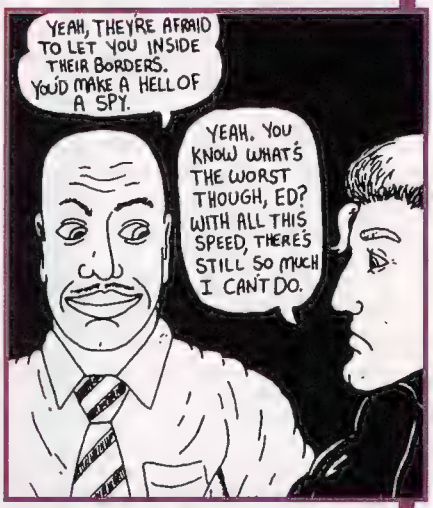
But don't hold your breath for the answers. The big companies have an image to uphold. For an honest, thoughtful look at superheroes' life between the fights, check out *Holey Crullers*, a self-published, ashcan-sized mini-comic that's witty, entertaining and not afraid to show superheroes on the john.

"There are questions I've had over years of reading comics," says Troy Hickman, creator of *Crullers*. "They're the sorts of things people always ask themselves—'What kind of sex do Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Woman have?' Things like that. People debate them at cons, but nobody ever puts it in a story." Until now.

Holey Crullers, written by Hickman and drawn by Jerry Smith, is kind of a quirkier *Astro City*, with a rotating cast of heroes. Hickman's characters are familiar—the speedster, the grotesque strong man, the psionic—but they congregate in the most unheroic setting imaginable: a donut shop by the name of (What else?) Holey Crullers.

"With *Crullers*, I want to take all conventions of the superhero genre and do a '180' with them," Hickman says. "Most mainstream comics are 80 percent action, 20 percent characterization. I've reversed that."

Already, *Crullers* is drawing attention for its honest—and unromanticized—look at superheroes' daily lives. Case in point: *Crullers*' infamous "bathroom" story, fast becoming a small-press legend. In *Crullers* #2's "Head Games," the lead characters—"Mental Midget" and "Man-Witch"—spend almost the entire story on the toilet. Enemies in the outside world, the two share some personal time—and a roll of toilet paper—as they discuss their origins and their take on each other. "I'm not your arch-foe?" Man-



Don't be fooled by the 'homemade" simplicity—*Holey Crullers* shows superhero life from a different perspective.

Enemies Mental Midget (left) and Man-Witch spend an entire *Crullers* story on the toilet discussing their take on each other.

Witch asks Mental Midget. "That's kind of...disappointing, somehow. I guess I'll just have to try harder."

Despite his penchant for off-center stories, Hickman is an amiable Midwestern sort (he still uses "golly" in everyday conversation) who's spent virtually all of his 33 years reading comics. Although he grew up reading the standards—*Justice League*, *Fantastic Four*, *X-Men*—Hickman knew early on what sorts of stories he liked.

"I always liked the old JLA/JSA teamups," he says, speaking of DC Comics' annual meetings between the JLA and their Golden Age counterparts from the 1960s through the '80s. "There was always one page where the characters would stand around talking and shaking hands. I always thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if we could hear what they were saying?'"

Holey Crullers grew out of a nine-page story Hickman created with Smith for a small-press anthology. In the story, a reporter interviews the super-fast Speeding Bullet. But the heroic life has its drawbacks—for a speedster, normal life is a crushing bore. Even worse, speed powers are occasionally useless, as when a young girl falls into a well. "She died," Speeding Bullet tells the reporter. "And you know what I was doing while it happened? I was out getting sandwiches for everyone." The reporter leaves with a newfound appreciation for his normal life; the story became issue #1 of *Crullers*.

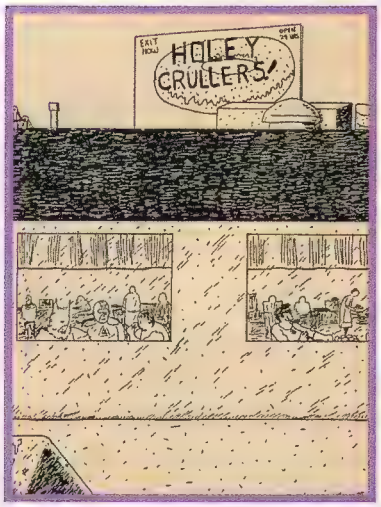
"The whole story is conversation, so I needed a good place for these two to talk," Hickman says. "A donut shop seemed the thing to do." *Holey Crullers* thus became a chain of coffee-and-donut joints/demilitarized zones, where heroes and villains alike can relax with a cup of joe and a danish. Superpowered bouncers enforce a no-fighting rule.

Hickman prints copies of *Crullers* at a copy shop and distributes them through mail orders and small-press trade publications. Though he lives the fanboy's life—submissions, conventions, comics in the living room—Hickman, a freelance writer, also has some professional training. He holds a master's degree in creative writing from Purdue, and his academic background has given him a broader perspective on writing comics.

"I wanted to bring some of the mindset from text fiction—self-contained short stories—into comics," he says. "I like to write eight- to 12-page stories with a character that's previously unseen, and within those few pages, flesh out the character. The stories end, but they're often not resolved in a final way."

One such story is "Elsewhere," from *Crullers* #3, featuring Digital Man and his adopted son Analog Boy. A supervillain has imprisoned Digital Man, and Analog Boy's tracking device brings

Don'tcha wish *your* town had a Holey Crullers donut shop?



him to the Holey Crullers shop—but the young hero doesn't find his mentor. Ironically, Digital Man is literally right under his nose, in the microverse within a *Crullers* napkin holder. Analog Boy pledges to continue his quest, and Digital Man in turn holds onto his faith in his son.

"People were ready to hang me after that story," Hickman laughs. "They wanted it resolved! But for me, the story said what I wanted to say."

Crullers' art also breaks with convention. Sure, you can call it simplistic or crude, but Hickman believes it adds to *Crullers*' charm. He says Smith's art looks to capture emotion rather than attitude. "I'm the mind behind *Crullers*, but Jerry is the heart," Hickman says. "There's a lightheartedness to the book, but when there's a more emotional moment, Jerry can capture it as well. What he draws is exactly what I see in my mind."

Issue #5, published in December, featured a DC "Earth-Prime"-style story, where superheroes travel across dimensions to meet Hickman and Smith. Future issues will continue with the rotating cast of characters; first up is a patriotic gadgeteer named "American Pi."

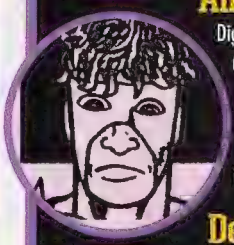
What does Hickman hope the future holds? "In the best of all possible worlds, I'd like to take *Crullers* full-sized and have it seen," he says. "Plus, there's the 'Holey Crullers' movie. And Underoos! Holey Crullers' Underoos would be great!"

Tennessee-based James Busbee once met his Earth-2 counterpart. They spent three hours in the john together retching up Golden Age burritos. (HEY! Wanna get Holey Crullers*? It's available for $1.50 postpaid from Avernus Comics, 3200 S. 9th Street, Apt. A, Lafayette, IN 47905.)*

Crullers' Crew

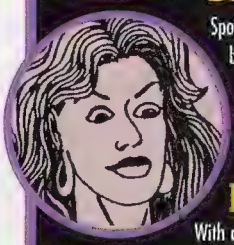
Acidic Jew

Moshe Chomsky is a gentle, highly religious Jewish man with a special gift: He can dissolve anything he touches. And while he uses his powers to help those in need—like the Oklahoma City bombing victims trapped in the rubble—his gift is also a curse. Something as simple as eating a bagel is now a monstrous task for Moshe, who must use extreme concentration to turn off his powers for brief moments at a time.



Analog Boy

Digital Man's sidekick was a child prodigy: He built his first death ray out of two magnifying glasses and a Slinky when he was only four. He was adopted by scientist Robert Hastings, and out of a desire to make a better world for his adopted son, Hastings became the superhero Digital Man. Now, with DM lost, Analog Boy realizes that while his intellect is vast, his emotional development is stunted. Can he continue on without his father figure there to guide him?

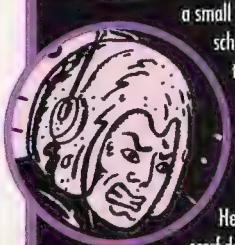


Debuton

Spoiled brat Patricia Van Buren's life changed forever the night she turned 16. Driving her brand-new sports car, she plowed through the wall of a research facility conducting gravity experiments and now has impenetrable skin and the mass of a Mack truck. But with so much crime in the world, the young frightened heroine feels like a small fish in a huge pond. Will she give up crimefighting for good?

Knockout

With a mere touch, she can slow down a person's metabolism to the point where they fall asleep. But she's fighting a foe that she can't conquer with her powers: obesity. Knockout joins a support group for overweight superheroes and discovers the group wants to wallow in self-pity, proud to be overweight. So Knockout does the only thing she can: forms her *own* support group causing a rift within the Crullers community.

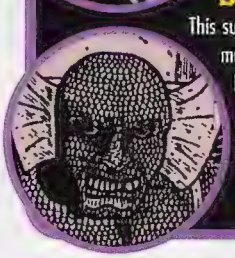


Mental Midget

With the power to read and control minds, the Mental Midget's certainly a big hero in a small package. As a young teenager, the hero's powers first manifested themselves at school, where he was perpetually tormented by the tawdry thoughts of his horny teenage peers. After learning to control his mind-reading powers a bit, he discovered his mind-control abilities and "convinced" the Homecoming Queen to attend the prom with him, which is something he still regrets to this day.

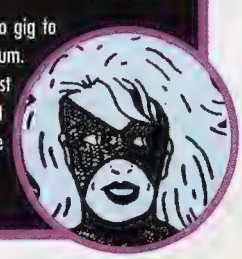
Speeding Bullet

He can read all the books in a library in seconds! Circle the globe in an instant! And scarf down more donuts than an entire precinct of cops! He's the Speeding Bullet, the world's fastest superhero, and his life's a living hell. Besides not being able to have a normal sex life (The friction, y'know?), he's thoroughly bored. He's read every book in the library, watched every movie ever made (after learning to lip-read so he could fast forward through 'em) and practically memorized every billboard in the country. And when his speed's unable to save a girl trapped in a well, the Speeding Bullet may just take his own life.



Strangeness & Charm

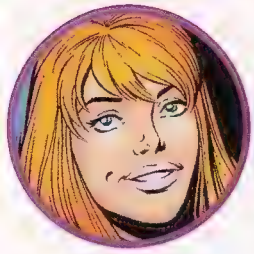
This superpowered brother-and-sister team are in the hero gig to make up for the sins of their supervillian father, Quantum. But when Quantum dies and his children read his last will and testament, startling secrets are revealed that change Charm's heroic life forever. And not in the way you might expect. *JB and the Wizard staff*



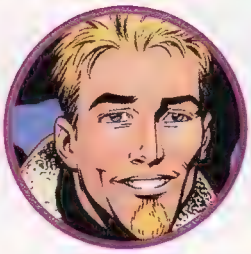
NEXT GEN-

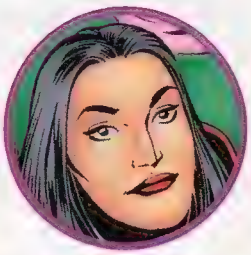
ERATION

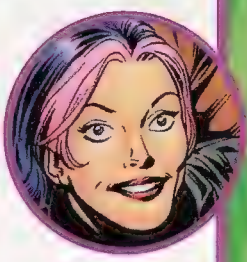
John Arcudi and Gary Frank crash the Gen13 party, with plans from family reunions to exposing Rainmaker's REAL sexual preference


FAIRCHILD

GRUNGE


BURNOUT


RAINMAKER


FREEFALL

There's a new *Gen13* in town.

Before you get worried, the beautiful but level-headed Fairchild isn't going anywhere. Ditto for party animal Grunge. The same applies to Freefall, Burnout and Rainmaker. Hey, even Mr. Lynch, their mentor, will still be hanging around to continue his guidance.

So, what's up, you ask?

After 25 issue, the brand-new creative team of writer John Arcudi and artist Gary Frank will take over for the original dynamic duo of Brandon Choi and J. Scott Campbell. And wait'll you see what they've got in store for the trouble-magnet teens.

Under Arcudi and Frank's direction, the Gen13ers will be having a family reunion of sorts. And according to Arcudi, it's about time. "Pretty much when the book started," he says, "Lynch promised the kids he would help them all find their parents. And we don't get to meet the parents of a lot of superheroes, do we? Time, I figure, to break that tradition. Seems to make sense that when you're talking about teenage heroes, their parents are going to be an important, though not overshadowing, element of the book."

Arcudi (co-creator of Dark Horse's *The Mask* and DC's *Major Bummer*) and Frank (*Incredible Hulk* and *Supergirl*) were initially scheduled to team up on an issue of *Gen13 Bootleg*, but Arcudi became concerned when his planned story contained elements used in an earlier issue of *Bootleg*. and the project basically died. But when original creators Brandon Choi and J. Scott Campbell recently left the popular book they helped launch, Arcudi was surprised by an offer to write *Gen13* on a regular basis, with proposed-*Bootleg* artist Gary Frank still on board. "Apparently, [WildStorm Publisher] Jim Lee saw my *Major Bummer* stuff at DC, and either he thought I'd work cheap, or he actually liked it," Arcudi laughs.

Gen13, for the uninitiated, follows the often lighthearted, sometimes angst-filled adventures of five superpowered teenagers: Caitlin Fairchild, the level-headed team leader, whose incredible strength and beauty is matched only by her incredible mind; Percival Edmund "Grunge" Chang, a party animal who can adopt the molecular properties of anything he touches; Roxy "Freefall" Spaulding, the misunderstood, insecure and youngest member of the team, who can manipulate gravity; Bobby "Burnout" Lane, whose quiet demeanor belies his fiery powers; and Sarah Rainmaker, a fierce environmentalist with an even fiercer control over the forces of nature. Under the tutelage of John Lynch, the team is on the run from International Operations, the sinister organization that helped develop their powers.

While the Gen13 kids have to worry about everything from zits to terrorists, Arcudi and Frank have even bigger worries, namely the fans. Being part of the first full creative roster change on the book, the writer and artist certainly have some big shoes to fill. Which just begs the question: Can they do it?

IF IT AIN'T BROKE...

Arcudi is quick to point out that he and Frank intend to retain all the elements that fans have come to appreciate and expect from *Gen13*. "We weren't hired to fix anything," he says. "The fact that it's lighter than the other WildStorm books is what drives its popularity, I think, so the tone of the book will be substantially the same. And it will still be very much a character-driven book. These are the sorts of things I like to do in comics anyway.

"One of the things I really liked about Brandon and Jeff [Campbell's] work is how the characters were superheroes, yet more

BY JAY FAERBER

The Gen[13]ers won't just be getting a new look artistically, but a new look on life, as the team heads to New York City.

often than not, they had to be *dragged* into situations. So while I do want to throw in some situations where the team becomes more proactive, look for that reluctance to continue."

Frank couldn't be happier with Arcudi's approach to storytelling. "If you've seen my *Flash* [from DC's recent Tangent line], you can tell I really like the more lighthearted stuff. Even back when I was doing *Incredible Hulk*, I always enjoyed the human bits more than the big fight scenes." But don't expect Frank to alter his style to more closely resemble the manga-influenced look of departing artist Campbell. "Jeff and I have different ways of drawing, so the book is really going to have a different look. I just hope it doesn't drive people away in droves!"

Besides looking different, however, the Gen[13]ers will be looking at life in a new way. That's 'cause they're moving! They'll be saying goodbye to sunny San Diego, as they settle into New York City…at least for the winter. "In the summer, they're going to want to get the hell out of the city," says Arcudi, a former New York resident. Frank laughingly groans when he talks about having to draw New York. "If you look back at my *Incredible Hulk* run, you can see I *never* had to draw buildings. I hate drawing New York. I'll have to talk to John about that."

The new creative team's first storyline, beginning in February, will actually ask more questions than it answers. And, according to Arcudi, he wouldn't have it any other way. "I really want to immediately get fans scratching their heads," he says. "Every so often you need to throw some ice water on the situation to wake everyone up. In issues #26 and #27, I want to establish a new ongoing conflict, but not with a villain, *per se*. Lynch is going to be working on something very big and very secret, which estranges him more and more from the kids. This only fuels Caitlin's growing mistrust of him. I'm also introducing at least one new character who's actually pretty old. And while he's going to be kicking some ass in the book, I can't characterize him as a villain."

Freefall and her teammates' problems may snowball in the Big Apple.

Also look for Arcudi to delve more into the workings of the characters' powers, as well as show them using their abilities for more mundane, everyday activities. He holds fast that most people, if suddenly given superpowers, wouldn't use those powers to *only* fight injustice—that is, if they fought injustice at all. "Let's face it, if I had Green Lantern's ring, I'd be using the thing to crack nuts," jokes the writer. Now, don't look for Roxy to suddenly start using her levitation powers for something like shoplifting, but Arcudi *does* want to show the team using its powers for more than just fighting. The facets Arcudi wants to explore are logical extensions of the characters' existing powers. "If Sarah has control over the forces of nature, doesn't that also include *earth*? And if Grunge can disguise himself as Fairchild's bed [as Grunge claims he can], can he disguise himself as a 22-year-old man so he can buy beer? And if so, why wouldn't he?"

While Arcudi plans to explore different avenues of each character's powers, there is one universal power he wants to address, and that is the mind-link the Gen[13] kids share. "They can't read each others' minds or anything, but there *is* something there, and we've seen it more than once."

CHARACTER GENeralizations

Keeping specifics about his upcoming storylines close to his vest, Arcudi is willing to reflect on the team's individual members. Each character has a distinct personality, and the writer plans to play up that angle. "Fairchild's a really cool character," he says. "She's the strongest character, because she's the leader, but she's also the weakest character, because she doesn't *want* to be the leader. That's the chink in her armor, that reluctance." Frank, meanwhile, wants to capture some of what artist Adam Hughes did in his two-issue *Gen[13]: Ordinary Heroes* mini-series. "[Hughes] had her

"I hate drawing New York. I'll have to talk to John about that." —Gary Frank, Gen[13] artist

"If Grunge can disguise himself as Fairchild's bed, can he disguise himself as a 22-year-old man so he can buy beer?"
—John Arcudi, Gen[13] writer

be just this impossibly beautiful creature that you can't miss for a two-mile radius, and I'd like to continue that," Frank says.

No slouch in the "impossibly beautiful" department is Sarah Rainmaker, who, Frank points out, is much deeper than she initially appears. "She's a deceivingly complex character. When she first appears, she seems to just be the token indigenous American, but as the series goes on, she has surprising depth." Sarah's character generated a bit of controversy when it was revealed early in the series that she has lesbian tendencies. But she also appears to have feelings for Bobby, which is something Arcudi will address. "We're still talking about it, but if I have my way, she'll be a lesbian, rather than bisexual. Leaving her bisexual leaves the door open to do that Hollywood-thing, where they take a character who started out gay and evolve him into a straight character."

As for Bobby Lane, the book's brooding musician, who's had at least one fling with Sarah, Arcudi has some interesting family endeavors planned. "If I'm not mistaken," he says, "we only have Fairchild's dad's *word* that Bobby is Lynch's son." Arcudi wouldn't commit to whether Lynch really is or isn't Bobby's father, but he is fascinated by one part of Bobby's personality: He's a babe magnet. "I find it interesting that Bobby is the most white-bread and normal of the group, and yet he still gets all the chicks." Frank, who finds the evolution of Bobby's appearance interesting, intends to keep with the precedent of Bobby's ever-changing look (he's gone from an innocent, all-American look to a harder-edged, grungy look, complete with goatee). "Burnout's look really changed a lot over the entire run, if you look back and read them in one sitting. I intend to keep his look in tune with the latest styles."

Where Bobby is a ladies' man who doesn't think of himself as one, Grunge is the exact opposite: "Grunge *thinks* he's a ladies' man, but doesn't really score that often," Arcudi says. "But he's great comedic relief, and is certainly the goofball of the group. He's the voice of satire and often reason in the book. That makes him pretty cool to work with. He says out loud what a lot of the readers must be thinking when they read these stories. Or in any event, he says out loud what *I'm* thinking when I write these stories."

Arcudi makes no qualms about saving the best for last, and easily names Roxy as his favorite character. He believes she's the character who the book's female audience most identifies with. "She's not some goddess like Fairchild, and she's a little weirded out by Sarah's [sexual persuasion]." In fact, Fairchild's physical prowess has a bit of an adverse affect on Roxy. "Fairchild's stature and physique really make Roxy feel very paranoid about how she looks," says Frank. Arcudi plans to delve into what helped shape Roxy's personality by introducing us to her stepmom. "I really want to see who influenced her as a child. Who made her this strong-willed, yet still knock-kneed girl that's typical of so many kids?" The writer also has some ideas about how powerful Roxy could actually be. "People don't really appreciate how strange a force gravity is. They don't realize it has an impact on many things...like light."

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

One of the key elements of *Gen[13]*'s success is its realistic portrayal of today's youth. Are the new creators worried about keeping up with the latest trends? Not at all. According to Arcudi, it's only a matter of observation. "How can one *not* stay in touch with youth? The youth culture is all around us, it dominates what we watch and the music we listen to, or at least the music I listen to. All one has to do is pay attention. The only way not to be aware of what's going on with kids today is to cling to the youth culture of the past like some pathetic old fart—and that ain't me, I dare to hope!"

While *Gen[13]* will keep its playful, lighthearted feel, the kids themselves will have to face the cold hard truth about their mentor, John Lynch, and the possible lies he's told.

And while Arcudi focuses on keeping the Gen13 kids *sounding* current, it's Frank's job to keep them *looking* current. The secret of his success at portraying the latest fashions? "I don't know that I do any research, *per se*. I guess I just go out a lot!"

Even though this venture marks the first time Arcudi and Frank are collaborating, the two seem to be hitting it off. "My job is to keep Gary happy!" laughs Arcudi. "I find that I get in a rut if no one gives me input as I work. Aside from my editor, Gary's my first audience, so I do appreciate his feedback." Frank also seems happy with the working relationship, stating, "I think we really click. John seems to be receptive to my input, which I really like."

The new creative team hasn't signed on for any set number of issues, but both are looking forward to a healthy run on the book. "In order to really commit myself, I've already stopped drawing the *StormWatch* covers," Frank says. "But I'm really looking forward to plodding away on a monthly book again, and not having a contract is the way to go, because everyone can keep their options open in case this turns out to be unpleasant for any reason." Arcudi, who hasn't needed to lighten his workload, agrees that not having a contract is the way to go. "It gives Jim [Lee] the option to say, 'Nah...maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all!'"

Never let it be said, though, that either creator is pessimistic about taking the book to new heights. According to Arcudi, "I'm going to try to write odder stories, stuff that's as weird as the kids' powers, and let's face it, they're weird. But that doesn't mean I'm looking to write more convoluted scripts. No way.

"I want to make the stories simpler, more accessible to an audience that may not be familiar with the whole WildStorm Universe, much like the early days of the book. That's what I'm hoping to do." W

Seattle-based writer Jay Faerber wishes he could disguise himself as Teri Hatcher's bed.

Create-A-Plot

So just how hard is it to produce an issue of *Gen13*? Easy as pie! First, come up with an idea for a variant cover (Or 13!) and the important stuff's already done. The only thing left is that pesky writing chore, and with our easy learn-at-home writing course, anybody can do it. All you have to do is take a plot point from the first category (BLUE) and link it to a plot point from the second category (ORANGE) and then to the next and so on. Just remember who taught you how to do this when you get all rich and famous.

Explosive lesbian splash page

- Changing out of her wet T-shirt, Rainmaker makes a suggestive remark to one of her female teammates...
- Applying lotion to her sunbathing female teammate, Rainmaker makes a pass at her unsuspecting friend...
- While leaning waaaaay back in a belly-cut T-shirt, Rainmaker accidentally knocks over her k.d. lang CD collection...
- While watching "Ellen" naked, Rainmaker comes to the realization that all men are evil and fries Lynch with a lightning bolt...

Sledgehammer character-reinforcement

- ...distracting Grunge from listening to *INSERT FLAVOR-OF-THE-MONTH BAND HERE* and playing the N64, when out of nowhere...
- ...startling the topless Freefall, who's popping her gum and trying on her sixth (SIXTH!) trendy new outfit, when out of nowhere...
- ...shocking Burnout, who's off brooding in a corner with his guitar and goatee, when out of nowhere...
- ...jarring the banana-eating Fairchild, who's working diligently at her computer and thinking "Where're my pants?", when out of nowhere...

Seen-it-before plot twist

- ...Caitlin Fairchild's long-lost father breaks into the room, exclaiming, "Burnout, you can stop your incessant whining—your father's alive and is secretly..."
- ...Caitlin Fairchild's long-lost father breaks into the room, exclaiming, "Hurry...Marvel's finally caught on to our lame Lockheed/Qeelocke rip-off and is getting ready to..."
- ...Caitlin Fairchild's long-lost father breaks into the room, exclaiming, "What the hell?!? Did Disney draw all you girls' eyes or..."
- ...Caitlin Fairchild's long-lost father breaks into the room, exclaiming, "Holy crap...is it cold in here or is it just me? No, wait, you girls feel it too. Sooo...whaddaya say we..."

Baffling purchase discovery

- Naked manga ninja assassins attack! Whoop, you've accidentally chosen an ending for *Gen13 Bootleg*. Sorry, we know it gets confusing sometimes with all the Gen13 product out there. Just choose another ending.
- Your eyes melt out of your head! Whoopsie, you've inadvertently picked an ending for the latest Gen13 3-D book. Sorry about the mix-up, but it happens with the six million different Gen13 books out there. Go choose a different ending.
- Uh-oh...time paradox! You mistakenly chose the ending of *Gen13 Interactive*, a comic where readers choose the ending! Honest mistake with all the different Gen13 comics out there, but combined with this stupid sidebar chart thing, you'll be trapped in this time loop forever! Quick, go pick a different ending!
- Chamber blasts Emplate with a psi-bolt! Oh no, wait...you unfortunately chose the ending to one of the seemingly endless Gen13 crossover/one-shot books. Honest mistake. Go choose a different ending.

It's No Bull!

The rumors are true! Top Cow has secretly produced a brand-new Witchblade comic book co-starring Lara Croft from the mega-hot video game **Tomb Raider**!

Featuring gorgeous interior art by artist Michael Turner, this full-length Witchblade comic was not available to comic stores and is already in great demand!

Now you can this super-rare comic for **FREE**! Just order $25 or more from this ad and it's yours **FREE**!

WBTR1L **Witchblade/Tomb Raider 1** (Rare regular cover) ..... **FREE***

WBTR1V **1** (Super-rare exclusive variant cover - Michael Turner art!) **$5**

* **FREE** with every $25 order from this ad!

Ascending in Price

This extremely rare variant cover of **Ascension 1** by David Finch depicts Lucien holding someone's head!

ASILX **1** (Limited Variant) **$10**

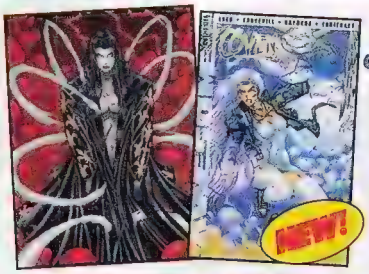
The Battle Begins!

Get an exclusive **Battle Chasers** prelude story for only $3!

BCP1 **Battle Chasers Prelude 1** (New!) **$3**

BCP1G **1** (Super-rare gold logo) **$8**

ST BCP **Set** (2 reg.cover & 1 gold logo-reg. $14) **$9.95**



The Coven is Golden

The Coven from Awesome is hot and these super-rare gold logos are even hotter!

COV1G **Coven 1** (Gold logo variant cover - Limit 1) **$15**

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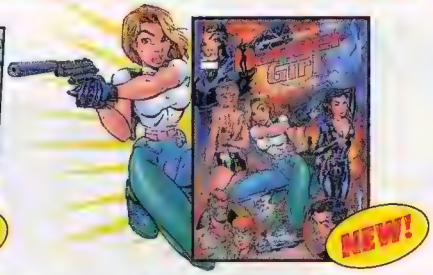


Danger Girl Exclusive Preview

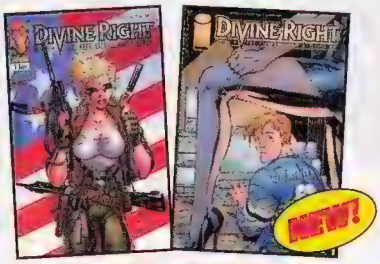
Did you miss out on **Gen13 1**? Well, now you get a second chance. Featuring an exclusive cover by J. Scott Campbell, this rare comic introduces all three Danger Girls! **Red Hot!**

DGP1L **Danger Girl Preview 1** (Exclusive cover) **$5**

In the Dark!

This very rare exclusive comic contains the story from **The Darkness 1/2**!

DARKM1 **1** (Exclusive) **$5**



A Divine Gift!

Artist Jim Lee is back with **Divine Right**!

DR1L **Divine Right 1** (Exclusive variant cover) **$5**

DR1PL **Divine Right Preview** (Exclusive variant cover) .. **$5**

The 1st appearance of Divine Right! Super-rare!

Daddy's Little Girl!

With art by Randy Queen, our exclusive variant cover **Darkchylde Preview 1** is hot!

DCHP1L **Darkchylde Preview 1** (Exclusive cover) **$5**

DCHP1G (Exclusive gold logo variant cover) **$10**

The Tenth Rules!

The Tenth returns as a regular series! Get an exclusive variant cover of issue 1 for only $5!

TEN0 **Tenth 0** (Exclusive) .. **$5**

TENN1L **Tenth 1** (Variant) **$5**

Witchblade Exclusives!

Talk about rare finds! Now you can get some of the rarest Witchblade comics ever!

WITB2L **Witchblade 2** (Scarce encore edition) **$5**

WITB18L **Witchblade 18** (Exclusive variant cover) **$5**

WBE1L **Witchblade/Elektra 1** (Exclusive variant) **$5**

WITB0 **Witchblade Origin** (Rare exclusive comic) .. **$10**

Xena's Cutting Edge!

The Warrior Princess is hot and we're your official source for these rare limited issues!

HLJ3G **Hercules: Legendary Journey 3** (Exclusive gold logo Xena photo cover) **$10**

XEN1L **Xena 1** (Exclusive variant Xena photo cover) .. **$5**

XENY1L **Xena Year One 1** (Exclusive comic) **$3**

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Wizard *casts the* Thunderbolts *movie!*

Casting Call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos not credited are from the Everett Collection.

It's a lie. That's the truth. The Thunderbolts aren't the heroes they make themselves out to be. Under their masks, these *faux* do-gooders are Marvel Comics' Masters of Evil, a subversive group of scum hell-bent on world domination. While the masses stand up and cheer for the Thunderbolts, the team's leader Baron Zemo has cooked up a plot so sinister it defies the imagination.

Now, time is running out. The 'bolts have been uncovered as the Masters of Evil. But is it too late? Is the world doomed? More importantly, is there a better time to make a movie about the Thunderbolts? With villains sour enough to gag a goat, betrayal and intrigue galore, and even a touch of romance, "Thunderbolts: The Movie" would roll across America as a Godzilla-sized hit.

Well, if Hollywood's not up to the challenge, we sure as heck are. Here are our picks for the Thunderbolts movie. We'll see you there, and this time, *you* pay for the Gummi Bears.

CITIZEN V

Put a mask on undiluted evil and you've got Citizen V, the T-Bolts' leader (a.k.a. Baron Zemo). Juergen Prochnow ("Air Force One") does villainy with a sneer and an accent that would fit the team's melted-cheese-faced boss to a capital "T."

TECHNO

Sporting a very suave beard and goatee, Charlie Sheen ("Hot Shots") is the deadest of dead ringers for the team's resident tinkerer Techno (secretly The Fixer).

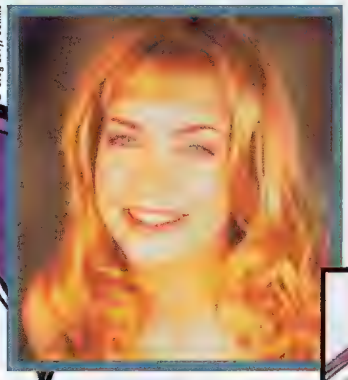
© Gerardo Somoza/Outline

ATLAS

In the big-time world of giant portrayal, Grant Show gets the nod to play Atlas, who was originally Goliath. The baby-faced Show showed a simple-minded, good-natured side during his years on "Melrose Place"—just like our ridiculously big buddy Atlas.

© Naomi Kalmony/Outline

© Greg Levy/Outline



SONGBIRD

Screaming Mimi…er, we mean, Songbird is as cute as she is confused—and deadly as a rattlesnake. Behind her pretty smile, Melissa Joan Hart (from "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch") smolders like the fiery villainess she'd be asked to play.

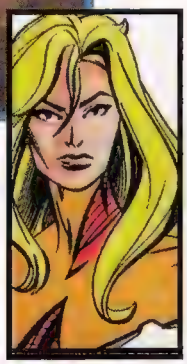
MACH-1

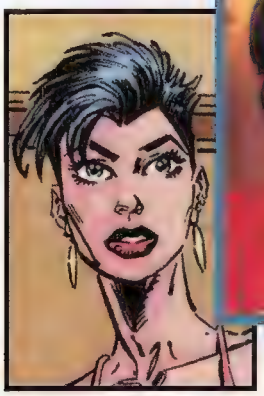
It's a bird, it's a plane, it's…a guy in a flying tin suit? Chunky country crooner Billy Ray Cyrus combines charm and cockiness aplenty to fill the role of self-important crud Mach-1 (which happens to be a better name than The Beetle).

© Gerardo Somoza/Outline

METEORITE

The doctor is in! Lingerie model Rebecca Romijn is a lock to play the lovely but twisted Meteorite (also known as Dr. Karla Sofen, a.k.a. Moonstone).

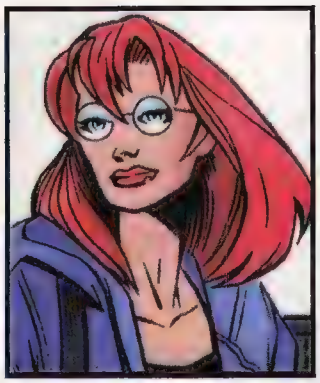




© Brian Smith/Outline

JOLT

Irene Ng, the spunky lass from "The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo," puts the "Ng" in "enthusiastic actiNG." As the Thunderbolts' new recruit, young Miss Ng would be just a bit to the left of perfect.

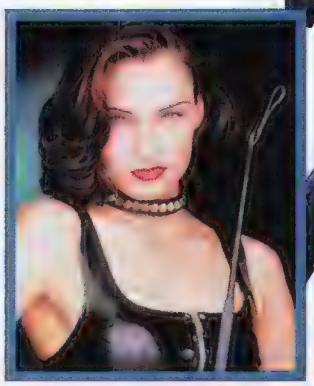


DALLAS RIORDAN

Determined and gutsy (but still kind-hearted) in her role as Laura on "Little House on the Prairie," Melissa Gilbert showed a certain Dallas Riordan-esque quality. She's the sure bet to play mayoral liaison Riordan.

BLACK WIDOW

If slinkiness were legal tender, supermodel Famke Janssen would be Donald Trump. Janssen played a gorgeous Russian killer in "Goldeneye," and she'd do beautifully as the Russian superhero/spy Black Widow.



© Daniel Roy/Outline

G.W. BRIDGE

Think imposing. Think intimidating. Think Bernie Casey from "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" as G.W. Bridge, the intrepid head of S.H.I.E.L.D.

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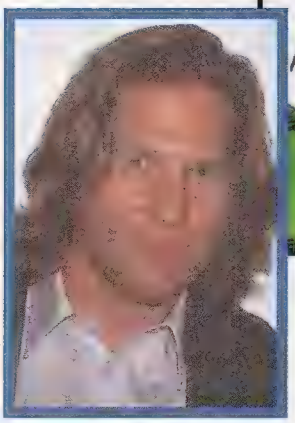

© Steve Sands/Outline

THE MAD THINKER

Uncombed and with his copyright-pending Looney Tunes stare, Jeff Bridges ("Tron") would be the maddest Thinker anyone could think up.

© Jeffrey Newbury/Outline

BARON VON STRUCKER

Decrepit sleaze Baron Von Strucker would shiv his own mom for a Coke; Mitch Pileggi looks like he'd shiv his mom, dad and some *neighbors* for a Coke. Check out "Shocker" to see how correct this statement is. W

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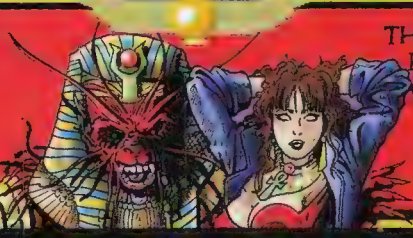

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DAVDEZ

Liefeld (left) and his right-hand man Loeb have managed to snag four top Marvel artists for Awesome.

An Awesome Attraction

Why has Rob Liefeld's Awesome Entertainment done a better job of recruiting creative talent than any other publisher?

Something very wrong is going on here.

First, artist Ian Churchill abandons high-profile Marvel assignments on *Cable* and *Avengers*. Then Jeff Matsuda ditches Marvel mutant fame on *X-Factor*. That's followed by Ed McGuinness leaving the white-hot *Deadpool* penciling assignment. Finally, Steve Skroce vacates one of Marvel's flagship titles, *Amazing Spider-Man*.

Four talented artists. Four mega-Marvel titles. Gone. And where do all these artists go? Perhaps to DC Comics? Maybe to band together to start their own company, *á la* Image or Cliffhanger? Nope. They all wind up at a seemingly illogical place called "Awesome Entertainment." Which begs one burning question: Why? Why would these artists, *any* of which any publisher would hire in a second, all wind up at a small start-up company headed by the controversial Rob Liefeld?

Awesome is the new publisher rising from the ashes of Liefeld's previous comic companies, Extreme Studios and Maximum Press. The company has been able to nab top talent, even given the fact that Extreme, Maximum, and Liefeld himself carry the baggage of the past. Liefeld's dealings with his former partners at Image Comics ended in litigation and Liefeld's departure. Marvel Comics recently sought an injunction against the publication of *Fighting American*, citing the character showed too much resemblance to Marvel's Captain America. But Awesome's case prevailed and *Fighting American* was published as scheduled, albeit with small, court-ordered changes.

Against this backdrop, one has to wonder: What is it that drives these artists here? The reasons are many, from the opportunity to work with top-notch talent to first-rate production quality.

THE MOORE AND LOEB FACTOR

"Awesome offered me the one thing no other company could," says Steve Skroce, who is penciling Awesome's revamped *Youngblood*. "And his name is Alan Moore."

Moore, the writer best known for his classic tales in *Swamp Thing* and *Watchmen*, has a full year of Awesome's *Supreme* under his belt and is gearing up for a second. He also wrote *Judgment Day*, the mini-series that served as Awesome's "ground zero" and will be writing the new *Youngblood*. Moore is held in reverence by many of his peers, and is *the* reason Skroce made the switch to Awesome. "Spider-Man is about as secure a job as you can have in this business," Skroce says. "But if I'm going to do the work of my life, it's going to

BY JIM McLAUCHLIN

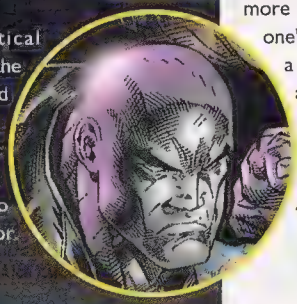
All photos except where noted by Paul Schiraldi

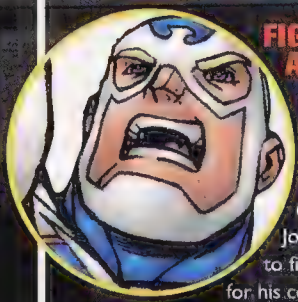
THE AWESOME TEAM

Not familiar with some of the Awesome characters? Here's your scorecard:

THE COVEN

A group of five mystical beings look to maintain the balance between good and evil in Awesome's universe. But another five-man band, The Pentad, are looking to skew things in evil's favor.



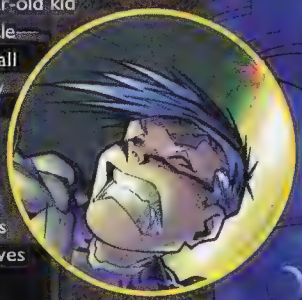


FIGHTING AMERICAN

The 1950s-era Joe Simon/Jack Kirby creation is brought into the modern day as John Flagg continues to fight the good fight for his country.

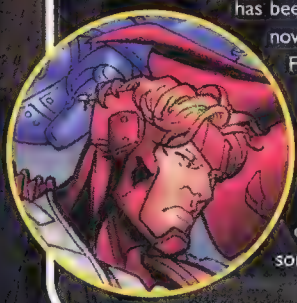
KABOOM

Geoff Sunrise is a 16-year-old kid tied into the Kaboom Cycle—the force that powers all explosions no matter how big or small. He's got a pair of mysterious gloves that allow him a small control of the cycle, but also a bevy of bad guys looking to take the gloves from him.



YOUNGBLOOD

The former government-sponsored superteam has been disbanded and is now...privately owned! Find out what happens when new "young blood" characters are brought in... including the team owner's adopted son. ■ *JM*



be with Alan Moore. In 50 years, there will be maybe three guys people will still be talking about as great comic creators and Alan is one of them. I just want to be near that."

Moore recognizes his role as a potential talent magnet, but downplays it. "It's nice that someone may want to work with me, and I really don't think about it any more than that," he says. "But if someone's enthusiastic, they are going to do a better job. So the ultimate effects are good."

But Moore is not writing everything at Awesome. The man who picks up most of the Awesome scripting is Awesome publisher and comic veteran Jeph Loeb, who Rob Liefeld credits with landing one of Awesome's big catches. "Ed McGuinness is a Jeph Loeb contact through and through," Liefeld says of the young artist who pencils *Fighting American: Rules of the Game*. "Loeb's got the silver tongue and he'll sit on the phone all day playing on someone's eardrums. For a portion of the talent, Jeph is a giant draw."

The soft-spoken McGuinness admits his former assignment on Marvel's *Deadpool* "just wasn't fulfilling anymore and wasn't working out." McGuinness says that Loeb, a man he calls, "a nice guy and a close friend," has "severe

Skroce's redesigned Youngblood (from left): Big Brother, Shaft, Doc Rocket, Suprema, Johnny Panic and Twilight.

recruiting power. He really knows how to deliver a speech."

Skroce also testifies to Loeb's sway. "I gotta hand it to him," he says. "Jeph has an attitude about the books, a real sky's-the-limit approach that gets you excited. And he's on the phone all the time, just seeing how you are. He's always calling from that damn car phone. I'm afraid sometime he'll crash when I'm talking to him and I'll have the last conversation with Jeph Loeb. I'll probably have to fill out paperwork on it."

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

In addition to people, there are things many fans take for granted—like coloring and paper stock—that can make or break an artist's relationship with a publisher. Liefeld knows this to be true. "When you're an artist," he says, "production of your comic *matters*. If artists aren't satisfied with the final product, they won't be hanging with you very long."

In the case of *Kaboom* creator and artist Matsuda, special considerations were made to get him into the Awesome fold. "With Jeff, it involved bringing in Steve Buccellato, the guy who used to color the X-Men who's one of the best in the business," Liefeld remembered. "And I also gave Jeff my personal inker."

"It's impressive," admits Matsuda. "Jon Sibal inks my pencils on *Kaboom*, which gives me great comfort. He's a pro and we've been friends forever. Jon's first job used to be to ink Rob's stuff, now I've got him. And I've been assured that if it comes down to deadline crunch, *Kaboom* gets inked first."

The Coven's Ian Churchill was also drawn in by Awesome's detailing. "They pay attention to everything right down to lettering," he says. "They care about the finished product." Churchill also feels his gripes are taken care of. "The last two pages of *Coven* #3 were colored awfully. But the rest of the book was great. So we adjusted things in the last two pages." All of which makes Churchill satisfied, and even more jazzed for next issue. "I feel as a creator, I can do my best work and the people I hand off to will do *their* best work. I feel like Awesome will bend over backward to make me happy in production, and that's the main thing I need to do my best."

Loeb agrees with the importance. "As a writer, you work your can off to write something you can be proud of," he says. "Here, I'm sure there are no fill-in artists or bullpen inkers. Can I get quality and consistency for my work when I work with [artist] Tim Sale and [letterer] Richard Starkings at DC Comics? Sure. But that's on a small, specific project. And I'm lucky to have that situation. At Awesome, it's every month. Automatic."

MASS MEDIA

For being a small publisher, Awesome is in a great position to give an artist the ultimate pot of gold at the end of the creative rainbow: mass media opportunity. Awesome is financially backed by Crossroads Communications, a company Loeb calls "an entity that finances small companies and makes them into larger ones." Crossroads has been involved in movie financing for years—backing films across the board from "9 1/2 Weeks" to "Short Circuit"—and also has music and software divisions. This leads to new opportunities.

"As long as Jeph and I have been talking about *Kaboom*," Matsuda says, "we've been talking about it as a multimedia project. There's a lot of places I'd like to take *Kaboom* and Awesome can help."

With Crossroads, Awesome has the money—and more importantly, the close connections—to get things like movies and video games done. "We've got an immediate relationship with Veritus, a software designer, right under the Crossroads roof if we want to make a *Kaboom* video game," says Loeb. "Crossroads purchased us to be an entity that would create properties for Hollywood, TV, software, toys, you-name-it."

Which makes Matsuda pretty damn happy. "They're doing a Kaboom toy sculpt as we speak," he says. "After only three issues. And it should be out by summer. Do you *know* how cool that is?"

CREATIVE CONTROL

An opportunity to shape their own future, plus a general openness in the company, draws talent to Awesome. That's why Alan Moore is there in the first place. "Working here is a chance to tell the stories that *I* want to tell," he says. "That's very important to me. 'Hands-off' has certainly been my experience here and that's really the only way in which I can work properly."

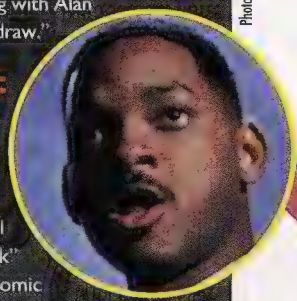
Loeb says that "hands off" is standard procedure. "We tend to let people tell the stories they want to tell," he says. "There's

NEW RECRUITS

Think Awesome has done a good job of getting talent so far? You're right. The hit parade continues in 1998, as new talents hop the Awesome bandwagon:

ALEX ROSS: The painter famous for *Marvels* and *Kingdom Come* is doing a fold-out cover for a future issue of *Supreme*, which may lead to more Awesome work. "*Supreme* is the strongest work Alan Moore's done in the last 10 years," says Ross. "This is something I want to be a part of."

JIM STARLIN: The *Infinity* trilogy writer will be writing *Fighting American: Dogs of War*. Says Starlin, "I figure anyone who Marvel sued couldn't be all bad. Plus, I like Fighting American. I've always been a fan of the character. And I'm talking to them about doing something with Alan Moore. Alan's quite a draw."



WILL SMITH: Will Smith? Yep. Liefeld has sold a screenplay called "The Mark" to Universal Studios that will star the "Men in Black" actor. *The Mark* as a comic is already in the works. "Will is involved in every aspect," says Liefeld. "He's our partner in this. You don't do things like this without his approval."

JADA PINKETT: Jada Pinkett? Yep. Will Smith's actress-girlfriend and star of "The Nutty Professor" and "Scream 2" has a horror comic called *Menace* in the works for late spring, '98. "If it wasn't up to snuff, we wouldn't be publishing it," says Liefeld. "She's a great writer." ■ *JM*

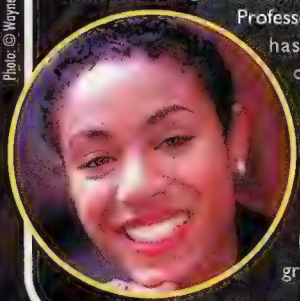


Photo: © Wayne County/Outline

no big editorial meeting that says the characters in *The Coven* have to have new costumes next issue so we can sell new toys."

And so talent has gravitated toward Awesome, be there controversy or no. "Controversy? That's not a factor. I think Rob's a great bloke," says the British-born Churchill. "And as for the lawsuits, he generally wins them, now doesn't he?"

And McGuinness, jumping on *Fighting American*, a book already mired in controversy? He's looking forward to the challenge—and the exposure. "I have no apprehension," he says. "It's a good thing as far as my career goes. I know people will pay attention to my work on *Fighting American*, and I'm willing to let my work speak for me."

The future? More of the same: heavy recruitment. "I gotta think we're becoming a place many creators are looking at," Liefeld says. "Anyone who is not tied down to an exclusive contract right now, we're probably talking to. We need to keep getting the best to keep this going."

In many cases, they are getting the best. Alex Ross (see sidebar) is dipping his feet in the Awesome pool. "When Alex Ross is doing a cover for us," Liefeld says. "I walk in the office and say, 'Come on! Is this a joke?' Then I see the drawing and I know it's real. It's like living a dream."

With existing talent in place and new talent coming in, Awesome's Loeb is happy to let the diverse line of books stand against the competition's on the stands. "When readers come in each week," Loeb says, "they can have a different experience each time, a different journey." Many readers are enjoying that journey. Young readers seem to have connected well with the 16-year-old strife of *Kaboom* and sales on the mystical *The Coven* are on a steady upward path.

"It's true. Nothing speaks as loudly as product itself," Liefeld observes. "And I think ours *yells*."

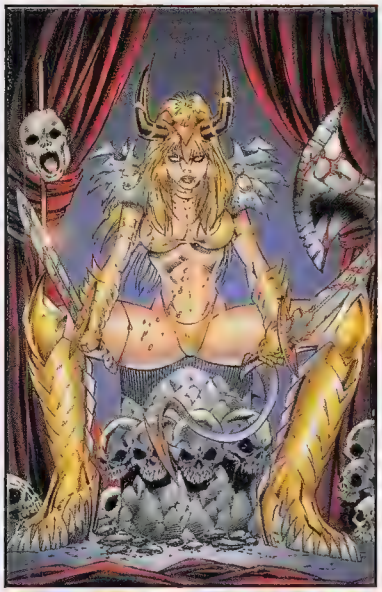
Jim McLauchlin has been known to go "Kaboom" himself, but never in polite company.

Photo: Everett Collection

After surviving a lawsuit from Marvel, Fighting American is enjoying artwork by young star Ed McGuinness.

ASK FOR AWESOME™

ENTERTAINMENT



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THE BIGGEST ■ THE BADDEST ■ SIMPLY THE BEST OF THE BEST!
THE A

ALL-WIZARD TEAM

'Wizard' drafts the ultimate superhero team

They're the toughest superhero team in comics. Drawn from two universes are the most powerful and versatile characters in existence, each adding their might to create an unstoppable force the likes of which has never been encountered. And this team doesn't exist.

They're the All-Wizard Team, a collection of superpowered heroes that—if combined into a team—would prove to be tougher than any JLA, X-Men or Avengers roster you could throw at 'em.

The criteria for the characters chosen? Aside from being individually powerful and having been part of a team at some time, each had to bring a vital component to the team dynamic. We weren't looking for a laundry list of heavyweight bruisers, but a balanced team that can handle any situation and wouldn't have to resort to simply punching its way through a problem.

And the members are...

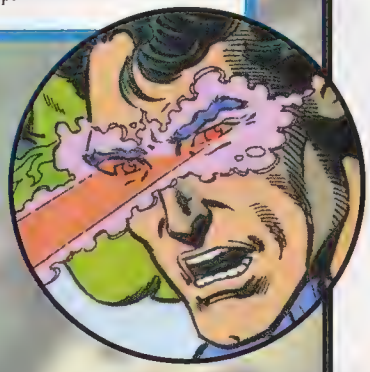
By the *Wizard* staff

CAPTAIN AMERICA
Function: LEADER

Why Cap? This one's a no-brainer. Be it leading a platoon of U.S. soldiers in World War II, the Avengers in countless cosmic battles or rallying the common man to stand up against his oppressors, Cap has proven to be the ultimate team leader. In this line-up, in fact, he would be a leader of leaders, since most of his teammates have led teams. His years of experience, combined with his fierce fighting knowhow and his ability to inspire others, have proven that be they men, women, heroes, villains or gods, Cap can take any group of individuals and make them a team. A winning team.

SUPERMAN
Function: Raw Power

Why Supes? Because he'll kick your ass. C'mon, this is Superman we're talking about here. Aside from being no slouch in the brains department, Supes has stood toe-to-toe with and defeated the Hulk, Doomsday, Asmodel...the list is endless. With the combined powers of flight, near-invulnerability, super-speed, super-strength and heat vision, Supes adds muscle to the team that would prove nigh-impossible to stop.

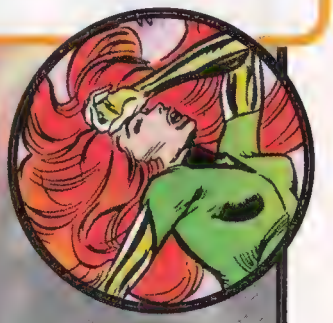


IRON MAN
Function: Technology

Why Shell-head? His brain. Yeah, I.M. has proven he's close to being in Superman's class with his flight, strength, invulnerability and spiffy-keen repulsor rays, but it's Tony Stark's mastery of all things technological that wins him his place on our team. Over and over again, Iron Man has shown his technological wizardry through on-the-spot modifications to his armor, deciphering futuristic gizmos or overcoming alien sciences. No matter what high-tech obstacle is thrown in the path of him, Iron Man can adapt to it, overcome it or go through it.

PHOENIX
Function: Mentalist

Why Jean Grey? No, not *that* Phoenix. We mean just plain ol' Jean Grey, but word on the street has it that she'll be going back to her classic green-and-yellow suit and the old Phoenix codename. (And it's about time, dammit.) Aside from her impressive telekinetic abilities (she held together a ship that was entering Earth's atmosphere and breaking apart in *Wolverine* #75), Jean earns her spot on the team thanks to her telepathic abilities. She can shield her teammates from mental attacks, read the minds of supervillains AND link up the team telepathically so they can respond instantly to Cap's orders without the bad guys knowing.



INVISIBLE WOMAN
Function: Defense

Why Sue Storm? Pull up a chair. As the most powerful member of the FF, the Invisible Woman is devastating offensively (flattening villains with invisible battering rams or explosively expanding small, invisible force bubbles within machinery), crippling when combined with partners (Think Superman is tough to beat? Try and stop an INVISIBLE Superman.) and—this being how she won her spot on the team—the queen of defense. Her powers have hidden her team from danger, kept her and her teammates alive in the depths of space and halted the hammering blows of the Hulk. By herself, she's awesome. Teamed with just about anybody else, she's one of the most dangerous heroes on the planet.

NIGHTCRAWLER
Function: Stealth

Why the fuzzy elf? He can go everywhere you can't. Think Batman or Spider-Man are acrobatic? They can't hold a torch to our blueboy Nightcrawler. He blends in with shadows, can "stick" to any surface, can use his feet and tail as effectively as his hands, and can teleport himself (and a limited amount of mass) up to two miles away! Can't get past a force-field or magical barrier? No sweat. Nightcrawler can teleport himself and some of his teammates (saaay, Superman and Iron Man) behind your defenses and shut you down before you even know they're there.

DR. FATE
Function: Magic

Why Doc Fate? He's potentially the most powerful member of the group (and as a sidenote, we're talking about the Kent Nelson, helmeted Fate, not the post-Zero Hour piece of crap one). Anyway, as the agent of the mystical Lords or Order, it's Fate's job to safeguard Creation from the destructive forces of Chaos. Sound like a tough job? It is. That's why the good doctor is juiced with the magical power to do just about anything. Aside from being able to hold his own against just about any foe the team would face, Dr. Fate insures the team doesn't fall prey to what might have been their only stumbling block: magic.

The holier-than-thou Wizard staffers had the wind knocked out of their sails when asked what this superteam would be called. "The Ass-Kickers" was the best they had to offer.

Sloppy Seconds

What follows are the 10 superheroes who just didn't make the cut. Though several of them are possibly more powerful than some of the heroes who made the team, these guys just had too much going against them... ■ *The* Wizard *staff*

BATMAN

Yeah, he's part of the JLA, but begrudgingly so. Aside from that, Bats has always had a problem taking orders. We just can't see him and Captain America play nicey-nice.

DR. STRANGE

Quite the toss-up between Doc Strange and Doc Fate, but we weighed who's more powerful: the Sorcerer Supreme of our dimension or the physical manifestation of the Lords of Order? Yeah, we went with the helmet.

FLASH

This was close, but Wally West is still too much of a hot-dogger to replace Nightcrawler in the stealth department. While our agile blue elf can sneak in, do his job and sneak out, Wally would be hard-pressed to not leave some sort of calling card. Nightcrawler's a more mature, reliable candidate.

GREEN LANTERN

Almost the same deal as Flash. While he possesses the most powerful weapon in the universe, GL also possesses one of the bigger attitudes. While Kyle's slowly finding his way in the JLA, he takes a backseat to the team players assembled above.

HULK

"Rharghhh, Hulk smash!" 'Nuff said.

MARTIAN MANHUNTER

It's either him or Superman, so we'll take Superman.

MR. FANTASTIC

The smartest guy in any universe would be great on any team except the one where he ain't the leader. His stint on the Avengers proved he's a free thinker who's gotta be in control. Sorry, but that's Cap's gig and we don't want anybody causin' inadvertent strife and stepping on toes.

SILVER SURFER

Aside from his not wanting to get stuck on Earth or be tied down to any one spot, having this guy hang around is an invitation for Galactus to show up and eat something.

SPAWN

What an angry guy. Definitely NOT a team player and most assuredly NOT interested in hanging around and playing superhero.

WOLVERINE

This guy has trouble with authority, is a loner by nature and, when you boil it down, we're just sick of the obligatory guy with claws on a team, even if it's the guy who started the trend. Sorry, Logan. ●

EIGHT TO THE FORE '98

A LOOK AT EIGHT CREATORS TO KEEP YOUR EYES ON

David Finch

Ask David Finch his career goals and he'll downplay his abilities with a laugh: "I just don't want to end up burned out in some alley somewhere."

Don't be fooled though. There's more to the Top Cow creator than cynicism, there's big-time aspirations. For Finch, *Ascension* isn't just his current project, it's a career goal. "It's kind of an ongoing thing. I don't know that you can ever look at comics as, 'Well, you know, here I am,'" the 25-year-old explains in a quiet, almost nervous tone. "I usually don't like to think in the long-term, but in a year, I want to try to be able to get up there."

Where exactly is "up there"? Finch avoids specifics, although his admiration for the likes of Marc Silvestri and Jim Lee may offer a clue. He wants to match their success, but is cynical of his chances. "I don't think there are the same opportunities available to do what Jim and Marc did."

Maybe not, but Finch does okay. Top Cow's *Ascension*, which he pencils and co-writes with the book's inker, Batt, isn't exactly collecting dust on the shelves. This despite the product's similarities in concept and style to other comics today—even other comics under the Top Cow label. "We're not exactly breaking the mold. We're doing something that's very magic-based in a company that's doing very magic-based stuff," admits Finch. "It's really tough to say what you're adding that makes your stuff valid."

Forget "valid"—a few years back, Finch wondered if his stuff was even up to par. "Breaking into comics was very different than I expected it to be. It was kind of a letdown," he says. "I saw everyone's pencils at Top Cow and thought I was back to square one." With a healthy list of credits to his name, he's since outgrown that particular insecurity. As a result of a connection made at a New York convention in '94, Finch's work got put under Silvestri's nose, and the Top Cow president apparently liked what he saw. Assignments came quickly—pin-ups here and there, then backgrounds in *Cyberforce* #6 and finishes in *Codename: Stryke Force* over Brandon Peterson's artwork. His first solo job came with the 12-page *Ripclaw* #1/2 in October '94. *Cyberforce Annual* #1, *Cyberforce* #15-#31 and pages in crossovers like *Elektra/Cyblade* and *Witchblade/Elektra* paved the way to *Ascension*.

And now Finch, who's since relocated to Santa Ana, Calif., is ready

BY SCOTT A. AUBREY

David Finch gets high marks with his Ascension *(left) and* Elektra/Cyblade *(above).*
BELOW: Thanks to The Darkness *(below left) and* Star Trek/X-Men *(below), Batt's no longer just "Silvestri's inker."*

FINCH

to continue his climb to the top. But he's not obsessed with it, nor his doubts. "I'm not really too concerned about what it's like to get there," says Finch. "I think it's pointless to plan too far ahead or you end up stepping over your own feet."

Batt

We've heard it all before. When it comes to comic books, inkers just don't get the glory. So how did Batt, currently the inker on two of Top Cow's monthlies, make a name for himself? It may have something to do with his attention-getting inking gigs, over Marc Silvestri's pencils on *The Darkness* and David Finch's on *Ascension*. Or perhaps it's got something to do with his co-writing the latter title with Finch.

Or it could just be the ginchy name.

"It's not that big of a thing. It was more for fun than anything," says Batt, defending his unusual one-word moniker. "One of my roommates in art school discovered it. One day he just stopped me and said, 'This is your new name,' and it stuck." Despite its downplayed origin, the pseudonym does provide the artist a bit of anonymity.

That's a problem Batt, 25, had little trouble with in his early days. Ping-ponging from one job to another, he wasn't exactly the guy on everyone's lips. "I jumped around a lot with other companies in the beginning because I couldn't find working situations I was happy with."

Batt, who makes his home in Alberta, Canada, did find work though. Back in '92, he inked a number of uncredited issues for the "Panic in the Sky" storyline that ran through the Superman titles. Numerous odd jobs have presented themselves in years since—*Cable* #16, *Codename: Stryke Force* #6-#7, *Cyberforce* #7, #9-#13, *Spawn* #25, *Medieval Spawn/Witchblade* and even *Star Trek/X-Men*. The short stints and one-shots allowed him the opportunity to maintain "quality control" in his work. But that quality still didn't bring recognition. Even starting at Top Cow, where he got the distinct pleasure of inking Silvestri, merely earned him the proud title of "The Guy Who Inks Marc Silvestri."

"At that time, Marc was already a legend basically," explains Batt. "And I was just the new guy who was inking him, so I think it took until *The Darkness* for people to realize that I was actually a team with Mark." That team

BATT

Photos: Jim McHugh

effort is one Batt doesn't plan to disrupt anytime soon. He plans on sticking with *The Darkness* for as long as Silvestri does—same goes for *Ascension*, which he hopes to put together a long, strong run on. No surprise: as co-creator of the characters, the book offers more fulfillment. "It's a lot more representative of me as a creator," Batt says of *Ascension*. "It's more interesting seeing the characters basically come to life, going to the store and actually seeing the book all printed up. It's a nice sense of accomplishment."

Leinil Francis Yu

Leinil Francis Yu, 20, is a fanboy—he admits it openly. But the *Wolverine* penciler has also got plans...to ride Logan's adamantinum-laced coattails right into comic book history.

"That's a big event in his life," says Yu of the much-anticipated but as-yet-unpublished story where Wolverine will finally get his adamantinum skeleton and claws back. "I want to be a part of it so I won't be that forgettable artist. I can be a part of something big."

For Wolverine fans, it doesn't get much bigger. And, according to Yu, the adamantium story's getting much closer to becoming a reality. "I really don't have a concrete schedule. But what I heard from [*Wolverine* editor] Mark Powers is it's going out this summer, late summer."

And the anticipation for Yu, the fanboy, is high. "I think we've got to get back the old Wolverine. Wolverine without the adamantinum was good for a while, but it's about time to get the old one back."

The penciler's first potential break came two years ago, when former X-Men artist Whilce Portacio held a talent search to staff a WildStorm studio in the Philippines. "At first, he didn't like my work so he was looking for other artists. I was a big fan of Whilce so I was cloning his work, which he didn't like. But eventually a friend of mine, who was one of Whilce's first picks, was really bugging him, telling him, 'Hey, Whilce! Hey, Whilce, get this guy!' So eventually Whilce budged and gave me a chance."

Unfortunately, the work never came. It wasn't until after a year of nothing, that Portacio brought samples of Yu's work to a convention in the states, that Yu got his shot—in the form of Wolverine. Issue #113 was Yu's first professional work—not counting the last issue of Entity Comics' *Aster: The Last Celestial Knight*. "I'm a bit ashamed of *Aster*," explains Yu. "I'm happy it came out, but I'm not really proud of it. Don't look for that book!"

Understandably, he's more enthusiastic about his collaboration with writer Warren Ellis on *Wolverine*. But just like a fanboy, he has dreams of working with other characters—"I don't think I can die without doing Batman"—and other writers, specifically Alan Moore, Frank Miller and James Robinson.

With April's *Wolverine* #125, it looks like he'll get his shot to work with a writer held in similar regard: Chris Claremont, who'll be writing that issue. Needless to say, Yu is pleased. "Working with Chris Claremont...there's no bigger honor than that. That's one of the biggest things of my career. That's something I can brag about."

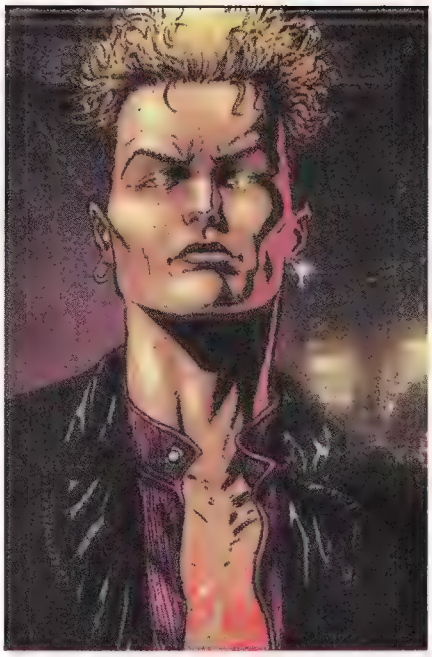
Fanboy Leinil Yu is raising eyebrows on Wolverine *(above). BELOW: Leonardo Manco claws his way into the industry with Marvel's* Werewolf by Night *and Acclaim's* Master Darque *(opposite top left).*

Leonardo Manco

Leonardo Manco is the type of guy that makes you wish you spoke Spanish. Or at least that he spoke better English. That way you wouldn't miss out on so many of the jokes.

With a deep, solid laugh, Manco is either one of the most joy-filled people on the planet or else he's really glad—really, really glad—to make *Wizard*'s "Eight to the Fore list." "This is a lot of emotion for me," he says after hear-

Yu photo courtesy of Leinil Francis Yu. Manco photo courtesy of Leonardo Manco.



ing the news, laughing—always laughing. "Let me sit down and smoke a cigarette."

With a response like that, you can only imagine how Manco reacted a few years back when then Marvel editor Fabian Nicieza asked him to do a fill-in issue on *Hellstorm* #6. The way Manco explains it, a penciler needed to be found quickly for the issue, and Nicieza, after reviewing Manco's samples, gave the Argentinean his shot. "I work—no sleep, no eat, no nothing," reports Manco in his typical broken English. "I do the job in 12 days, 22 pages in 12 days."

Three more issues of *Hellstorm* and a *Druid* mini-series, also for Marvel, were followed by a drought. Ironically, it was Nicieza who ended that drought, assigning last October's *Master Darque* one-shot from Acclaim. Now Manco's doing both the follow-up, the *Darque Passages* mini-series, as well as Marvel's relaunch of the classic '70s horror title, *Werewolf by Night*. With a schedule like that, Manco, 25, is at his drawing board a lot: "Sometimes very much, sometime very too much," he reports, finally confessing—between laughter—that some workdays reach 18 hours.

That's the price you pay when you're trying to turn out distinctive work and that's one of Manco's goals: "Well, the point is people's work should always be different from other people's. Nothing is the same when you want to do something very personal. When you think this way, it never is the same."

For Manco, personal means big. "I try to do movies, not comics—maybe this is the difference. I try to make compositions in the pages like a big screen in the theater. I don't want to do comics with panels...I want to do movies in the pages."

Specifically, science fiction movies. "I like very much the sci-fi, you know, dark sci-fi," he says, listing off big-screen productions like "12 Monkeys" and "Event Horizon." "Dark and dirty, this is the point."

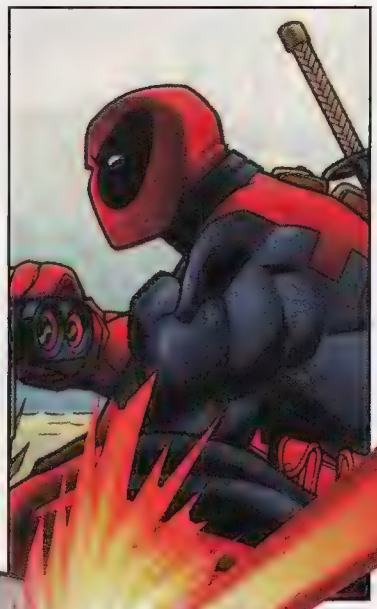
But for now, Manco's happy just being in the business—but not because he's fulfilling some childhood dream. No, the artist has more practical reasons for his job selection. "I do comics because I don't like work in the factories," he admits in a joking tone. And laughter ensues.

Ed McGuinness

What's step one in Ed McGuinness' proven method for breaking into the comic book industry? Two words: Be neighborly.

"I found out through word of mouth that the writer to Vampirella actually lives pretty much next door to me," reports McGuinness. The meeting that followed that revelation occurred a few years ago, when McGuinness' professional work was still limited to underground independents. The writer in question, Tom Sniegoski, reviewed some of McGuinness' samples and almost immediately McGuinness had work at Harris Comics, including the first two issues of *Vampirella Strikes!*

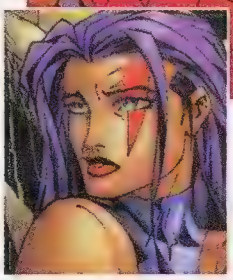
Sound too good to be true? Hang on, it gets better. After leaving Harris with eight or so months of experience under his belt, McGuinness showed his stuff to artist Joe



Express yourself! Ed McGuinness likes to draw gritted teeth on Fighting American—*a lot more than when he was penciling the fully masked Deadpool (at top).*

McGUINNESS

LARROCA!



Salvador Larroca's work on Flash (below center) and Heroes Reborn: The Return *(all other art) garnered the Spaniard a gig on* Fantastic Four.

Madureira at a convention in Orlando. "He liked my stuff so much he showed it to [Marvel editor] Mark Powers and two days later, I was in New York in the offices at Marvel," McGuinness recollects. "I showed him my samples and I got the *Wolverine '96* Annual, and then I was on *Deadpool*."

Surprised even to make the "Eight to the Fore" list, McGuinness says he doesn't get much feedback because of his need to stay ever-vigilant in his work. "I don't even know if I stand out with the fans," the 23-year-old says honestly, with an accent that betrays the fact he was born, and still lives in, the Boston area. Still, he at least appreciates his attempts to be different: "I try to go for a very full, very three-dimensional feel to my stuff. I don't add in little lines everywhere. I'm focusing more on storytelling."

Having kicked problems with deadlines that led to his decision to leave *Deadpool*, McGuinness is enjoying his work more than ever. That's partly because of his current project, Awesome Entertainment's *Fighting American: Rules of the Game* limited series. "I'm fulfilling some need within my artwork," he says of the Awesome project, which blends action and humor—McGuinness' specialties. "Because the Fighting American doesn't wear an entire face mask, I can draw facial expressions. And with the American's female sidekick S.P.I.C.E., I get to draw a young woman. I'm doing very archetypal males and females."

To put it plainly, the title offers luxuries McGuinness wasn't afforded on *Deadpool*. "The deadlines were so tight with *Deadpool*, I didn't have the chance to do what I wanted," he says. "It was basically 'draw without thinking.'"

Salvador Larroca

Salvador Larroca's had a big year. First, he nearly destroyed a universe. Then, he became the next in line to pencil one of comicdom's most storied superteams, the Fantastic Four. And, frankly, it's causing him to rethink a few things. "My dream used to be to pencil *X-Men*, but now it's not so important for me," says the Spaniard. "*Fantastic Four* is a very good book—they're the basis of the Marvel Universe. As everybody can imagine, I feel very excited and pleased. Now for me, *Fantastic Four* is the best Marvel book."

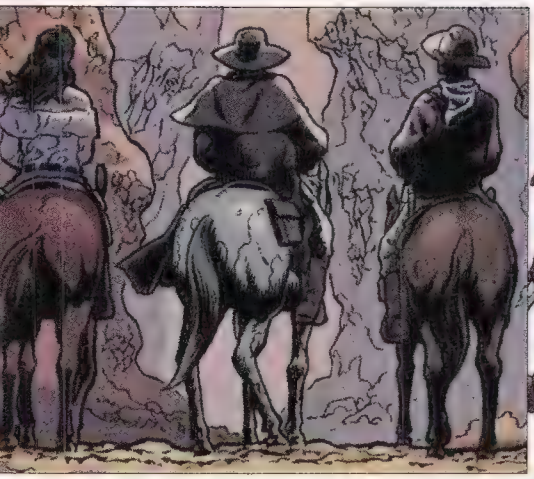
It's certainly one of the more popular right now. Recharged thanks to the 'Heroes Reborn' saga and now having started a new run with former X-scribe Scott Lobdell in the writer's slot, Fantastic Four is liable to be hotter than Johnny Storm's nova flame when Larroca takes over from Alan Davis as regular artist with issue #4.

"I am really surprised it was offered to me. After the Alan Davis books, I'm worried that the fans will not like the way I do things," says Larroca, who finds it hard to gauge fan reaction from his home in Valencia, Spain. "It's a challenge. My previous books were *Ghost Rider*, *Excalibur* and *Flash*. The responsibility is greater when I do *Fantastic Four*."

His current slots are most definitely a far cry from where he got his start. Discovered in early '93 while working as a cartographer, he got work for the now-defunct Marvel UK. Beginning with *Dark Angel* #11-#16, Larroca also turned out *Death's Head* #12-#15. After Marvel UK's demise, Larroca put together a healthy list of credits working for offices in the United States, including *The Incredible Hulk Annual* #20, *Flash* #95-#100, *Ghost Rider* #51-#81, *Gambit and the X-Ternals* #3-#4, *Speed Demon* #1, *The Uncanny X-Men* #338, *Excalibur* #107-#110 and more, most recently the mega high-profile *Heroes Reborn: The Return* mini-series.

But now the 33-year-old penciler's completely focused on *Fantastic Four*—designing some of the new villains Lobdell has cooked up, using his art to bring the team's characterization to life, and getting ready to stretch his abilities as the team explores every millimeter of the universe and beyond. "One thing I love about the Fantastic Four, is that one moment they are in space, another in the Negative Zone, another moment on the moon. Different settings, different situations—I like that about the book," he says. "The same thing gets boring. I like to change the point of view."

Larroca photo courtesy of Salvador Larroca.



John Cassaday makes cowboys cool with Desperadoes.

CASSADAY

John Cassaday

City slickers shouldn't write John Cassaday off because of his accent or rural background: This country boy knows what he wants…and what he already has.

"I'm lucky enough to have a style that's become as recognizable as mine," he says with a sheepish modesty that seems to fit well with his Texas drawl, not yet eradicated by a couple of years of New York living. "As good as some of the people influencing the market right now are, you get so many clones of these artists. That's something I'm really not into. I don't really get it, I need to be an individual as an artist."

So far individualism has paid off. Cassaday, the 25-year-old penciler of Homage Comics' *Desperadoes*, has an outlook that makes others take notice. That certainly was the case a few years back when convention trips to San Diego and New York led to jobs with Dark Horse and on 1997's *Teen Titans Annual* #1. Cassaday's career was also aided by writer Mark Waid, who showed samples of Cassaday's pencils to Homage, resulting in the *Desperadoes* assignment. Waid also helped secure the young artist's first published work, 1997's *Ka-Zar* flashback issue. Toss in a back-up in *Flash Annual* #10, Dark Horse's *Ghost* #27, as well as a series of *Ghost* covers and Cassaday was on his way.

With *Desperadoes*, Cassaday's pencils have meshed well with the book's quirky nature. The title's western tales offer a divergence from much of the superhero and magic-based stuff that dominates today's market, just as Cassaday's work diverges from much of the mainstream style. "It's nice for the first real project I get put on to be very different," says Cassaday, who especially enjoys the book's setting because of his background. "Everybody's doing the hero thing, guys in tights with big guns, and for me to do this was a nice opportunity. But my style lends itself to superhero stuff as well."

That will prove useful when he pencils and co-writes March's two-issue *X-Men/Alpha Flight* mini-series with Ben Raab, teaming former incarnations of both super groups. "What we're hitting is the character points. It deals a lot with the people," says Cassaday. "We knew that if there was a book like this, we would buy it."

LADRÓNN

Jack Kirby meets Moebius, as artist José Landrónn brings his retro-style to Cable (above) and the Amalgam Spider-Boy Team-Up one-shot (opposite).

José Ladrónn

Much like Cable, the character he's currently drawing monthly, José Ladrónn is a man out of place in his own time. The Mexican artist, who took over pencils on Marvel's *Cable* this past year, seems much more comfortable with char-

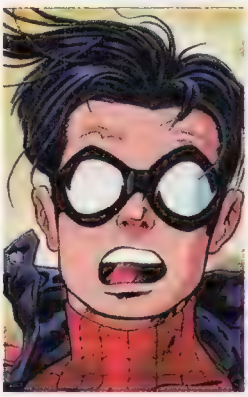
Cassaday photo courtesy of John Cassaday.

acters from a different age.

"Many people right now, if you ask who was the creator or who was the first penciler of *Fantastic Four*, many people say, 'Jim Lee,'" Ladrónn says half-jokingly, cutting through a heavy Mexican accent. That's one mistake Ladrónn would never make. Ask the penciler his favorite characters—Kamandi, Mister Miracle, Fantastic Four, Silver Surfer—and you can pretty much get a hook on his artistic influences.

"Jack Kirby, for me, was the best superhero artist," Ladrónn says. That fact shows in the 30-year-old's work, which blends a Kirby-esque feel with touches of the artist's other influence, Moebius. "With Moebius, I like the simple way he gave ideas in the drawings. It's more casual, more simple."

Despite Ladrónn's obvious love of the classics, that's not what he's best known for. His first professional work was a 12-page Dracula story in Marvel's *Shadow and Light*, but according to Ladrónn, he gets the most attention for his job on *Spider-Boy Team-Up*, part of 1997's Amalgam line from Marvel and DC. That may change with the work he's doing on *Cable*, which the artist nabbed following a meeting at the '96 San Diego convention. His run started with this past summer's flashback issue and continued with #48.



How long will his *Cable* stint be? Ladrónn doesn't know, but he does know he's happy. He's pleased with the psychology of the character, which he feels is better mapped out than most recent creations. "I know what's going on with him because I can understand where he came from and the things he has going on in his life."

Of course, that doesn't mean his dream project doesn't lay elsewhere—and to little surprise, it involves a classic character. He wants to "recover" Kirby's Kamandi for a new generation—and for his own personal reasons. "When I was a child, I did not have anyone around—my parents worked. When I got the Kamandi comics, for me it was something very similar. He was the last man on Earth, and I was the last one in my house."

The closest Massachusetts-based freelancer Scott A. Aubrey has ever gotten to Wizard's *"Eight to the Fore" is the time he ate four donuts. Mmm...donuts.*

PROGRESS REPORT

Checking in with last year's 'Eight to the Fore' gang

Photo: Jim McHugh

MICHAEL TURNER

Witchblade fans take heart—penciler Michael Turner plans to keep a hand in the red-hot book, even after he launches his own Top Cow project this coming year. "I'm not really going to leave *Witchblade* behind per se," says Turner. "I'm still going to be doing some key issues. I'm still going to be involved in the plot."

STEVE SKROCE

Why leave a choice assignment like *Amazing Spider-Man* to pencil Awesome Entertainment's new version of *Youngblood*, set to hit in early '98? Steve Skroce has one good reason: writer Alan Moore. "I figured to turn down an opportunity to work with someone like that wouldn't be very wise because you'll never know when you'll get the chance again."

Photo: J. Schuyler

JIM CALAFIORE

Still the regular penciler on DC's *Aquaman*, Jim Calafiore isn't just treading water. "I want to be moving more towards writing," says Calafiore, who's providing some ideas for an upcoming Triton storyline, on top of working with *Legion of Super-Heroes* co-writer Tom McCraw on a fill-in for *Legion*. "I want to be writing. It's just a fact."

LEE MODER

Lee Moder's last issue of *Legion of Super-Heroes* may have hit the stands, but he's not exactly scraping for work. There's *DC's Secret Files* and a possible Braniac 5 mini-series in the works. Of course, they're going to require adjustments on Moder's part. "I'm not used to having only one or two characters in each panel," says Moder, who penciled the numerous Legionnaires for over three years. "Literally, I'm aghast at how much space there is."

JEFFREY MOY

Jeffrey Moy's philosophy for work: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That's why the *Legionnaires* penciler has no plans to leave his current slot. "It's a good job so I don't really feel the need to go anywhere. You just can't get bored drawing this many characters," he says. "The Legion has pretty much something that everyone will like."

CARY NORD

Cary Nord isn't too upset about escaping the deadlines associated with a monthly grind. "It was a good thing for me," says Nord, who's kept busy since his departure on *Daredevil*, with work on last summer's *Wolverine* flashback issue, *Silver Surfer* #130, and the next Star Trek/X-Men crossover. "I wasn't doing great work at the end there anyway, so it was time for a change."

IAN CHURCHILL

One year ago, Ian Churchill left a healthy run as penciler of Marvel's *Cable* behind. Now, with Awesome Entertainment's *Coven* likely to return as an ongoing series, Churchill is having a blast penciling and co-plotting characters he created almost a decade ago. "It's great to finally see my own characters leaping from the pages, you know, especially as seeing they've been going around in my head for so long."

CARLOS PACHECO

Carlos Pacheco is adjusting to new team members and new writer Joe Kelly in the pages of *X-Men*. "Joe's plots contain a lot of tunnels and this means I have to put my thoughts into the storytelling," explains Pacheco. "You have no room to try and impact the reader with big visuals, so that means you have to stress characterization."

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Te

"We're going to make your mouth drool, " says *Uncanny* writer Seagle (right) on his and Kelly's upcoming X-Men plans.

The WIZARD Q&A

Marvel's new odd couple—writers JOE KELLY and STEVEN T. SEAGLE—must mix their vastly different styles to plot the future of the X-Men

am X-Men

EATING, BREATHING AND SLEEPING X-MEN? To some, it's a fanboy's dream. To new X-Men writers Joe Kelly and Steven T. Seagle, it's reality. "I've been living X-Men the last two days...I think I actually dreamt about them last night," says Joe Kelly, a big smile drowning out his shaggy beard. "I mean, how cool is that?"

Welcome to Day Two of Three in the X-Men Summit 1998. It's 6:12 p.m, and the day's not nearly over yet. The night shift has just begun.

Squished together on a small couch in the 10th-floor Marvel Comics closet-like conference room, *Uncanny X-Men* writer Seagle sits with *X-Men* writer Kelly. The pair has been concentrating on the X-Men for over 16 hours now, with breaks only for the bathroom, sleep, an occasional meal and oh, this interview. Despite the long hours, their excited giddiness and boyish grins overshadow their baggy eyes and frazzled hair. Lounging on an adjacent couch are X-Men associate editor Mark Powers and assistant editor Jason Liebig. Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras is still running around, attending to the daily Marvel business he missed while ensconced in his all-day story conference with the rookie writers.

But while Kelly and Seagle are new to the X-Men, they've certainly become familiar names to X-Men fans—although even the staunchest X-fan would admit the two are unorthodox choices, especially since their writing styles are almost 180 degrees apart from each other. Kelly, known for his humor, impressed Harras with his slapstick take on *Deadpool* and his tongue-and-cheek *Daredevil* run. And Seagle, known for his dark suspenseful style, gained acclaim with his more offbeat Vertigo titles *Sandman Mystery Theatre* and *House of Secrets*, and caught Harras' eye with the surprise success of Marvel's *Alpha Flight*. "It's nice to hear a fresh take on an established property," sums up Harras on his recruits, as he now settles into his seat, gearing up for more X-business. "And it's the unexpected choice, so it could take us in new directions."

And that's precisely why *Wizard* crashed this mutant meeting, hoping the X-crew spills the beans. "We're going to make your mouth drool," says Seagle. "Because we're going to be so vague that it'll make you wonder what these new guys are going to do."

By Matthew Senreich • Photos by Paul Schiraldi

WIZARD: What is your philosophy toward the X-Men?

SEAGLE: They are the heroes that get no credit for what they do. The Avengers get publicity, thanks and kudos. Same with the Fantastic Four. But the X-Men…half the world doesn't even know that they're there, and the half the world that does hates them. Yet they are doing the same job as or an even bigger one than most of the other heroes, and they get nothing for it except being hated and shunned.

KELLY: The X-Men are a family. Even though we talk about the Fantastic Four being the first family, the X-Men are the ultimate dysfunctional family, just trying to make their way in a really tough world. It's much more interesting to me how the older brothers of the X-Men deal with the younger sisters than if they are going to fight Magneto.

Scott Lobdell wrote the X-Men for seven years, and ultimately, you're riding off his coattails. What are you guys going to do differently and what will you keep the same?

KELLY: I want to focus a lot on interpersonal relationships. Scott [Lobdell] was doing a lot of high adventure, but I'm better at the smaller stuff.

SEAGLE: There was a lot of epic with Scott. But you have to have something to measure epic against. We're still going to have stories that are big in scope, with monumental villains. But our arcs may be a little shorter in length and a little more decisive in their finality. First, we both want to make sure that every single character has a very different and unique persona and agenda. We want to make sure everybody sounds different, has a different level of intelligence, has a different reason for sticking around, a different way of operating in battles and is just unique again.

HARRAS: Scott took an enormous challenge. He took the book over after Chris Claremont's 17-year run [as writer]. And he did what I asked him to do: keep the franchise as the #1 franchise. Now Scott's moved over to the Fantastic Four to see if he can raise that franchise to the X-Men's level of success. I would not have had Scott on X-Men for seven years if I didn't like what he was doing.

Who is going to be the main X-team?

SEAGLE: There won't be a set core group until the end of [1998]. Essentially, Joe loves the new characters and wants to explore them. I love the classic characters and want to re-establish and recommit to them. You could say that *Uncanny X-Men* is Classic Coke and *X-Men* is New Coke.

KELLY: Not New Coke, more like Dr. Pepper. [*Laughs*] I'm going to play with Marrow, Maggott and Doc [Dr. Cecilia Reyes]. I'm definitely going to use Cannonball because he's also young. I love trying to figure out how the new guys react to the established characters. I'll have them interact with Storm, Wolverine and Beast.

SEAGLE: I like Cyclops and Jean Grey and am very concerned about their relationship. They are the foundation of the X-Men in a lot of ways. Even though they'll be leaving the team for a little, we'll see their stories. Rogue will also play a factor because I love writing her. Wolverine initially. At the moment, Angel also.

[It's 7 p.m. and Bob Harras has to leave. "Don't mind me. Have to get home to the kids," Harras apologizes. Kelly and Seagle smile like evil children who are about to be handed off to a babysitter. "Jason, Mark, make sure they don't say anything they'll regret," chuckles Harras. Everyone laughs.]

So are there any other characters that you guys are going to be introducing to the team?

SEAGLE: Yes.

KELLY [*Turns to Seagle, perplexed*]: Who?

[Seagle whispers to Kelly.]

KELLY: Oh, yeah. Yes. But we can't answer that.

Can you say whether the new character is from another X-team or if it's a completely new character?

KELLY: The only tease is that this is

Quick Take

Favorite X-Man?

KELLY: As a kid, Nightcrawler, because he was cool, creepy-looking and funny. Today, I love writing Maggott and Marrow. They're still so new and it's like my contribution to this larger thing.

SEAGLE: Rogue. She surprises me the most. I never expected to enjoy writing her, and I find myself liking it more and more.

One of these X-Men might not live to see 1999.

going to be the year where things are legitimately shaken up at the foundation of the X-Men. The X-Men that you see in the beginning of the year, I don't think are going to be the X-Men at the end of the year.

SEAGLE: We know X-Men readers get very nervous when they hear that. But, honest to God, we care about these characters, and we're not talking arbitrary random changes for characters. It will be all for the better and consistent with what's happening.

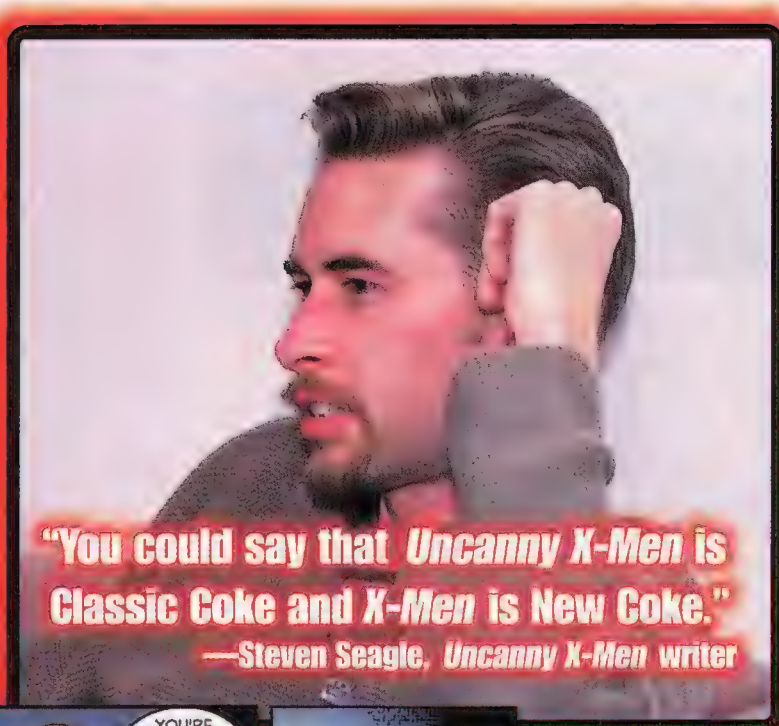
Are any old members going to be leaving the team?

SEAGLE: Cyclops and Jean [have taken] off to Alaska. Gambit's stranded in Antarctica.

KELLY: There's going to be Storm-centric stuff coming up which keeps people separated. But about people leaving? Everybody is just starting to come back together, so I wouldn't expect to see anybody disappearing for too long.

Are there any characters that you would love to put on the X-Men, but you just know wouldn't work?

SEAGLE: Not wouldn't work, but aren't available. I love Nightcrawler. He is my favorite X-Men character. But he's in *Excalibur*. Maybe he'll make a guest appearance.



"You could say that *Uncanny X-Men* is Classic Coke and *X-Men* is New Coke."
—Steven Seagle, *Uncanny X-Men* writer

A philosphical difference will divide the X-Men in August's crossover.

Is there any chance you might trade with existing X-books to get Nightcrawler or Colossus back on the team?

POWERS: Stuff like that has been discussed, but at the moment, they're *Excalibur* characters.

SEAGLE: We will have a reunion of the original X-Men in *Uncanny*. At a time when there is a little bit of ill will and a bit of bad blood on a couple of levels, there will be an organized reunion where the first five X-Men take stock of the [X-Men's] current state.

What is the deal with Professor X?

KELLY: He's being held by the Zero Tolerance guys.

POWERS: But we'll soon see that he is missing. Last time we saw him, Professor X was being held at a Hulkbuster base. In *X-Men* #73, Senator Kelly will find out that Bastion had been holding a renowned scientist at this base. Senator Kelly will go there knowing that it's Professor X, but the cell is empty. No one will know what happened to him.

KELLY: Jean Grey will be continually psi-scanning to find Professor Xavier, but gets no trace of him.

So are there plans to bring Xavier back before the end of the year?

KELLY: There are plans for him.

SEAGLE: The plans may not be to bring him back.

KELLY: There are plans to try and find him. But if we do it the way we're thinking, I don't think it's going to be the same old Professor X.

SEAGLE: Don't misinterpret. This is the tighter, more secure X-office. Paramount to all of this is surprise. With Professor X, we have a great plan. But there is no way we're going to tell you. We're not being vague because it's less fun, but because it's cooler not to know.

POWERS: It will be very late in 1998.

How vital do you think Professor X is to the X-Men?

SEAGLE: He's key to their existence. Is he important in the day-to-day operations? Obviously, they can get by without him. That is certainly one of the big questions in *Uncanny* over the next several months. Do they need him as a guiding force? And if they do need him and he is gone, what's going to fill that void?

KELLY: You have all of these new mutants on the team with runaway

Quick Take

Least favorite X-Man?

KELLY: I'm not a big Dazzler fan. I don't get the roller skates.

SEAGLE: Psylocke. I wish she were dead. She was British once, then became a ninja assassin? I don't get it.

Quick Take

Last X-Man standing in an X-battle royale?

KELLY: Wolverine would battle to the end and win.

SEAGLE: It better be Wolverine. Hands down, he's the most ferocious.

powers and runaway personalities. Now that there is no Professor X to reign them in and with Cyclops and Jean [having left], making them unable to act as surrogate parents, what is that going to mean?

What is the feel of the X-Men in the year 1998? The tone?

KELLY: I find myself in the headset of a high-school student. There are weird relationships going on and everyone's [saying], "I don't know what the heck I am doing with myself," or "Who the hell am I?"

SEAGLE: We're going to make sure that we're not always dealing with subjects of life and death, war and peace, and love and hate so much as, "Can I get a date?" or "Gee, I'd love to go to the movies, but I have to fight Magneto because he's in the backyard." There is room for both things.

Speaking of Magneto, what villains will show up?

KELLY: There'll definitely be some new characters. Variations on old themes. But this is a secret area. I don't like discussing it.

If I name names, will you respond to them?

KELLY: Sure.

Magneto?

SEAGLE: Back. He's their arch-foe and has nobility about him. He shares interest in the same goals and objectives as the X-Men, but has a very different means of getting his ends. He doesn't stop playing a role after *Uncanny X-Men* #350. He's always there. Magneto made his point with Gambit and did exactly what he wanted to do, which was undermine foundations of friends.

If Magneto is back, then who is Joseph?

SEAGLE: We just spent two days talking about Joseph and how we're tackling it. It's not that we don't have a plan. It's that we have too many plans, so we are still tackling it.

This begs a somewhat bigger question: Is this something that happens often? Is it normal for a story to begin without having a pre-planned ending?

POWERS: It depends on the writer's approach. Scott [Lobdell] would introduce an idea and he wasn't quite sure how he would finish it. That was something that excited him and he wanted to see where it would take him. Many times it took him to a place that was exciting to readers, but it really depends on your approach. I think you guys are different. [*Looks toward Kelly and Seagle.*]

SEAGLE: We are very structural in nailing down a story first. We came into the Magneto/Joseph thing right as Scott was shuffling the cards. Then we were dealt all the cards.

KELLY: Playing 52 pick-up, baby. [*Laughs*]

So how do you go about picking up pieces of a puzzle when you don't even know how it sticks together? I mean, do you have suspects of who Joseph really is?

KELLY: Everybody's got a theory. [*Laughs*]

SEAGLE: But there is one prominent theory about it. We're reviewing it. Making sure it works.

Rumor has it that Joseph is Proteus [who last appeared in *Uncanny X-Men* #128]. Is that true?

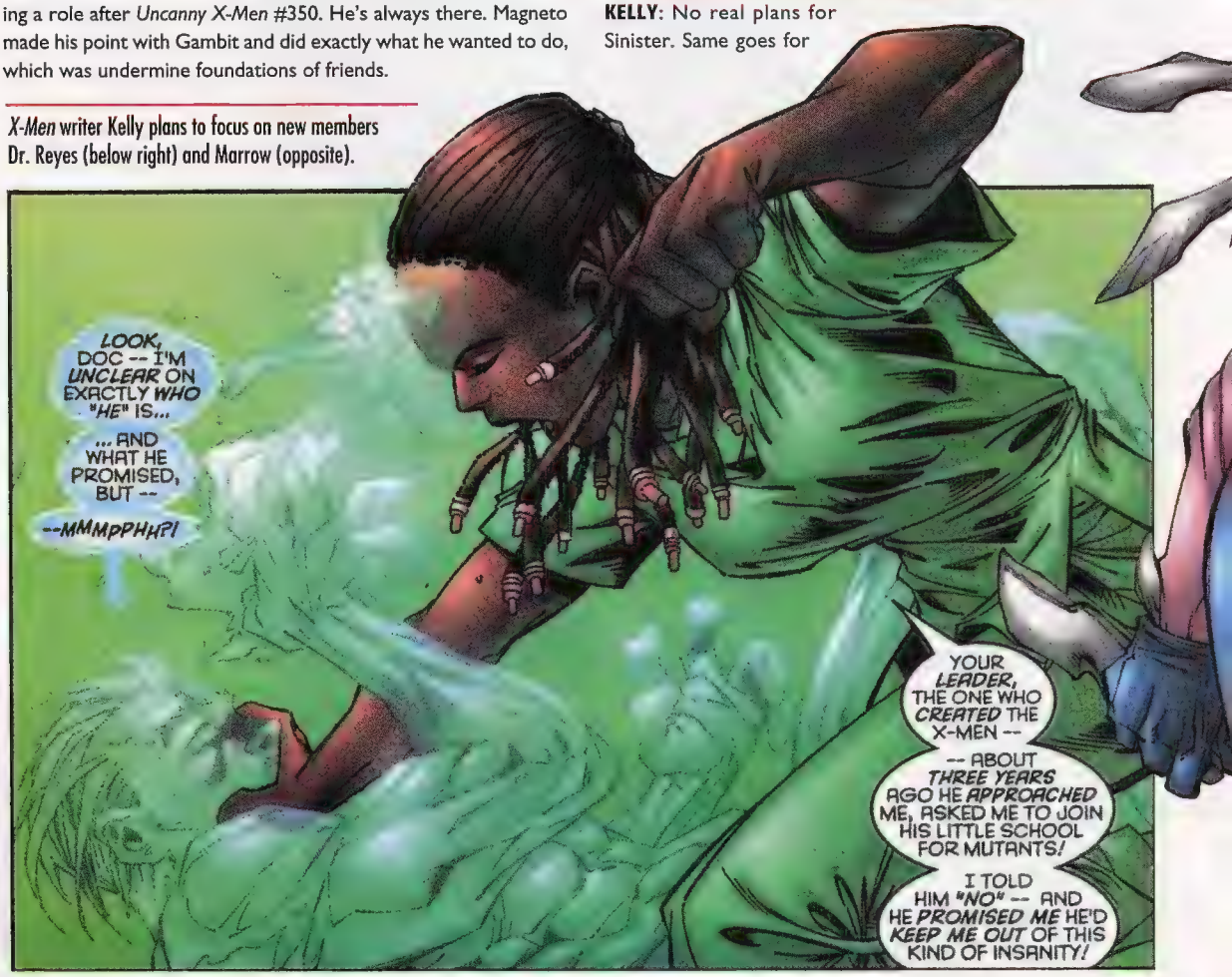
POWERS: That was discussed with Scott [Lobdell], but Joseph was never definitely going to be Proteus.

SEAGLE: Proteus may be the answer when it comes down to it. But you'll have to wait and see. There are other possibilities. Logical ones.

Moving on to other villains, what about Mr. Sinister?

KELLY: No real plans for Sinister. Same goes for

X-Men writer Kelly plans to focus on new members Dr. Reyes (below right) and Marrow (opposite).



Apocalypse. He's in this category too.

SEAGLE: We're not going to bring back a villain just to use him. There has to be a reason. Like in *Uncanny X-Men* #353, Sauron will show up. He wasn't in the picture until I saw what that issue was about and it became clear that Sauron had to be the villain.

KELLY: And *X-Men* #74 is a Marrow-centric story and features a villain who would logically tie into her and her past, the Abomination. Because of her ties to the Morlocks, the theme of ugliness versus beauty and the notion of losing your people, the Abomination just fit into the story.

So what about someone like Bastion?

KELLY: He's in prison right now.

SEAGLE: How many months did he consume last year? I don't think he needs to show up anymore right now.

But are we going to find out who Bastion is?

KELLY: The only reason to go back to him is to do the "Who is Bastion?" story.

SEAGLE: That's exactly why we're not going to go back to him, because we need a better story than that.

What about Sabretooth?

SEAGLE: We can't comment on that because somebody else may do something big with him. [*Looks knowingly at Kelly*] But that's a secret.

Juggernaut?

KELLY: I got struck by the Juggernaut as an impulsive decision for *X-Men* #70, in which he technically lays claim to the Xavier estate. We're going to see him show up later down the line, also.

How about Mystique or some of the ex-villains now on X-Factor?

SEAGLE: I love Mystique. But she is currently in *X-Factor*. We'll see what happens.

Rumor has it that certain X-titles will be canceled, which may allow certain X-characters to become X-Men. Is there any truth to this?

SEAGLE: There is truth. But that was the rumor a year ago. And those books are still around. What's funny is that Bob [Harras] has talked about books much bigger than the books you're probably referring to getting canceled. That is even more likely to happen. If it does and it frees up characters we see a use for, then we'll bring them in.

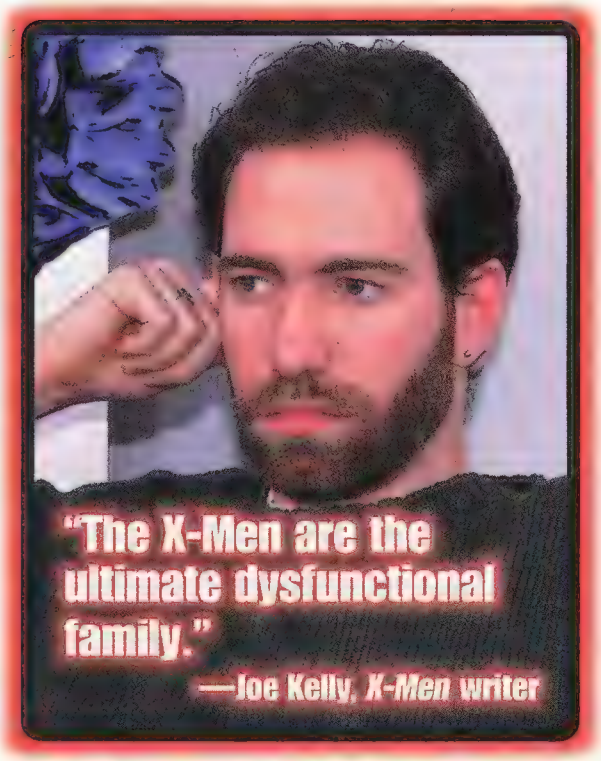
Can you say what books?

SEAGLE: What do you think?

Had to try. [*Laughs*] Okay, okay. Back to villains. The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.

SEAGLE: Love the name. My big problem with Marvel villains is that they all turn nice and join the team. The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, if I got control of them, would be evil mutants doing evil things.

I can do this all day, so I'll just ask:



"The X-Men are the ultimate dysfunctional family."

—Joe Kelly, *X-Men* writer

Any other villains I'm forgetting that you want to plug?

KELLY: Dark Beast is a very cool villain, but I don't know if he will fit in this year. I would like some of Spider-Man's rogues gallery to show up. I like to see cross-pollination. Abomination is a perfect example. Who knows? I'd even like to see the Tarantula. [*Laughs*]

SEAGLE: I love Stilt-Man. But again, it's about finding a villain that is essential to a character-driven story.

KELLY: I'm not good at the villain database. I'm not like Kurt [Busiek, writer of *Avengers* and *Thunderbolts*], who knows a villain for every situation. I'm the type who would go flipping through the *Marvel Universe* [handbook series] and come up with something.

Pretend the X-Men is a movie. What is the two-minute trailer for the next year of the title?

SEAGLE: You'll see Bishop hurtling to his death toward a twin sun.

KELLY: You'll see Marrow going up against Wolverine in full force.

SEAGLE: There'll be some romance from characters you may not have suspected.

KELLY: You will see the fantabulous Beast butting heads with other longtime X-Men.

SEAGLE: You'll see old friends turn against one another over philosophical differences.

KELLY: You will see familiar faces back together again for the first time in a long time.

SEAGLE: You will see Psylocke fall off the side of a building.

POWERS: You'll see the Dark Beast doing something really nasty to

Quick Take

X-Man most like you?

KELLY: I feel like Cannonball, the new guy. Next year, I hope to be Wolverine.

SEAGLE: Most likely Cannonball. Like Joe said, he's the new guy. Plus, I'm Southern.

KELLY: And *I'm* from the south shore [of Long Island].

someone you know and like.

SEAGLE: And you will see more X-Men and X-villains gathered in one place—together, united—than you have ever seen before. And that's in August.

August? Is that the next big X-crossover? What's happening in August?

SEAGLE: Something big.

KELLY: Huge. [*Laughs*] What can we say?

SEAGLE: There are times where you have to rely on your enemies to save you and there are times where your friends don't act at all like your friends. This August will be one of the times.

Are the X-Men going somewhere, then, or does this story take place on Earth?

SEAGLE: Yes and no and yes and no.

This is like pulling teeth. [*Laughs*] Who's the villain going to be?

SEAGLE: Even your friends can be your villains. It is hard to say who is what. This story is going to lead to the biggest philosophical division that you have ever seen happen among all the X-characters.

What leads up to this division?

KELLY: They don't know. To some degree, it's sprung on them.

SEAGLE: But in the situation, the X-Men have no choice but to respond, and they have to respond as the core of themselves as opposed to a super-powerful superteam.

How much will the X-Men tie into the other X-books during this?

POWERS: This is exclusive to the X-Men. You'll know that it's happening in the same universe, but you won't see the story in the other X-books.

SEAGLE: We're trying to avoid the 18-part crossover event. Things should have impact in the overall Marvel Universe and we should coordinate with all the books what those impacts should be. We don't want to require that you have to read a million books to get a story. But that's all we'll say about this.

How much will the X-Men tie into the rest of the Marvel Universe?

KELLY: We are open to that. One of the criticisms that I've heard and have is how mutant-heavy and incestuous the X-Universe is. That's where the villains come into play. I want to use villains from other books.

SEAGLE: As for heroes, Alpha Flight crosses over with X-Men in *Alpha Flight* #9 and *Uncanny X-Men* #355. Our objective is to show that this is a cohesive Marvel Universe. You can't take actions and not have repercussions felt on these books. And we'll be talking with Kurt [Busiek] or Scott [Lobdell] about crossing over with the Avengers or FF. I mean, we love the idea of Beast heading back to the Avengers for a purpose.

Now, as for tying up loose X-Men plots currently outstanding, will there be an end to the Legacy Virus?

SEAGLE: [*Smiles*] Turns out Tylenol cures it.

KELLY: Unknown at this time.

POWERS: It's not going to get cured any time soon.

SEAGLE: But you will see a much more active role of people to find a cure.

Will anyone die from the virus?

Bastion (left) is out of the picture, while Prof. X might be in—but not in the way you expect.

SEAGLE: Some people will die, but we don't know for sure if it'll be from the Legacy Virus.

So an X-Men member will die?

POWERS: Yes, an X-Man will die this year.

SEAGLE: I'm thinking that it will be sometime around...August. [*Laughs*]

Can you give us any clues as to who?

KELLY: Nope. [*Laughs*]

SEAGLE: All I'll say is unfortunately, it's not Psylocke.

Is Blink coming back?

SEAGLE: No. Blink is not coming back. At least, not as long I'm on the book.

Will Sinister's connection to Cyclops ever be revealed?

SEAGLE: Not right away.

POWERS: You pretty much know that story.

SEAGLE: Again, we're not on the Sinister kick right now.

What is Maggott's deal?

KELLY: He's a South African black man. He is not blue, but the blue is involved in his power. He's got a cool backstory and we'll definitely get into it soon.

SEAGLE: You saw a little bit about it in *Uncanny X-Men* #350.

KELLY: There's a special relationship there with Magneto. And there are certainly villains in the future that will be attached to him.

SEAGLE: As anybody with a past knows, the past is going to find you.

KELLY: He is definitely shady and a lot of bad things will happen that will only reinforce your belief of that.

What are the three biggest obstacles that face the X-Men today?

KELLY: Themselves—being number one. Interpersonal conflicts. And now, a lack of technology.

SEAGLE: They used to have all the technology of the universe at their fingertips and jet around the globe in a heartbeat. Now they have to hop on the city bus to get to Genosha. And the world is an obstacle. The perception of mutants is still the same. Like any oppressed group of people that suffers oppression, they suffer hard.

When all is said and done, how would you like the fans to describe your contribution?

KELLY: In a perfect world, when it is over 15 years from now [*Laughs*], I hope that they say it was really fun. I hope to have a moment or two that lingers. I don't expect to do "The Dark Phoenix Saga," but I would like to know that fans remember particular scenes that made them smile or laugh.

SEAGLE: I just hope somebody who loves the X-Men like I love the X-Men is talking to you in 20 years and says, "That Seagle/Kelly run was great." If that happens, I did my job.

*Much like a mutant, staff writer Matthew Senreich is feared and hated by the world he's trying to protect. He also likes eggs. (**NOTE:** For a full transcript and rare photos check out Wizard World Online on America Online [Keyword: Wizard] or on the web at http://www.wizardpress.com.)*

Quick Take

Which X-Man looks the coolest?

KELLY: I'd say Nightcrawler again. He's blue and a cross between human and demon.

SEAGLE: Phoenix, in a short while. [*Smiles*]

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Basic Training

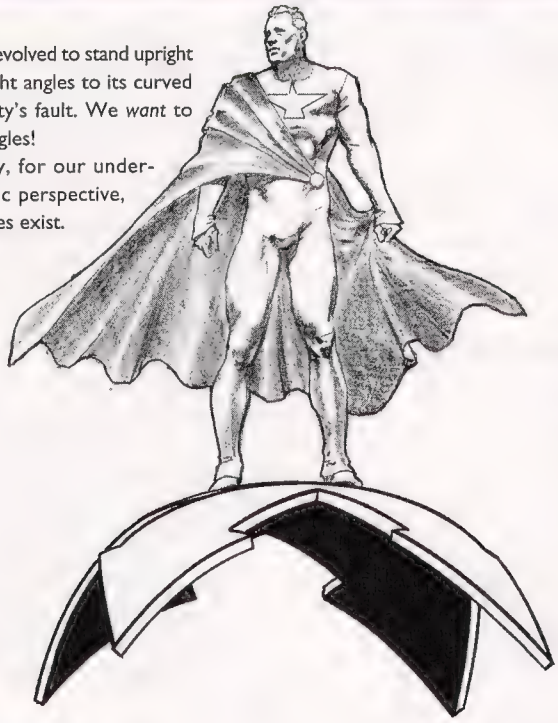
this month's host: Brent E. Anderson

How to Draw Curvilinear Perspective

There's no such thing as a straight line! Yep, I was pretty shocked when I discovered this at a beginning art class in college years ago. Traditional linear perspective (1-, 2- or 3-point perspective) failed to adequately convey what I was actually seeing in the real world. When I pointed out to my instructor that linear perspective was a cheat, he patted me on the shoulder and smiled. "You understand perspective," he said. Although I didn't have a name for it at the time, what I saw was curvilinear perspective (also known as dynamic perspective). Now, I enjoy drawing backgrounds and mechanical things (cars, weapons, machinery, buildings, etc.) immensely, and for the past several years, drawing *Astro City* brought the rigors of dynamic perspective forward as central to the believability of the city itself as a character. So here I am to share my thoughts with you on curvilinear perspective. But first, I'd better explain just what the heck curvilinear perspective is!

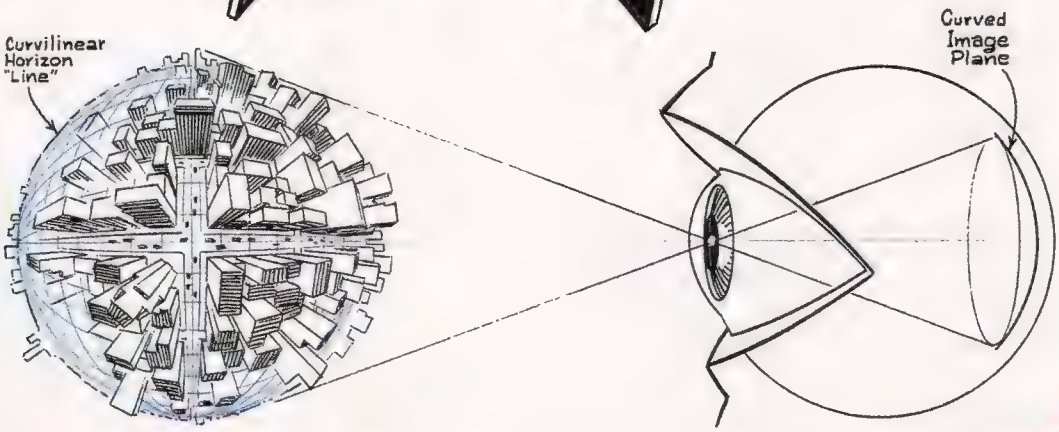
We humans have evolved to stand upright on a sphere at right angles to its curved surface. It's gravity's fault. We *want* to believe in right angles!

Unfortunately, for our understanding of artistic perspective, no true right angles exist.

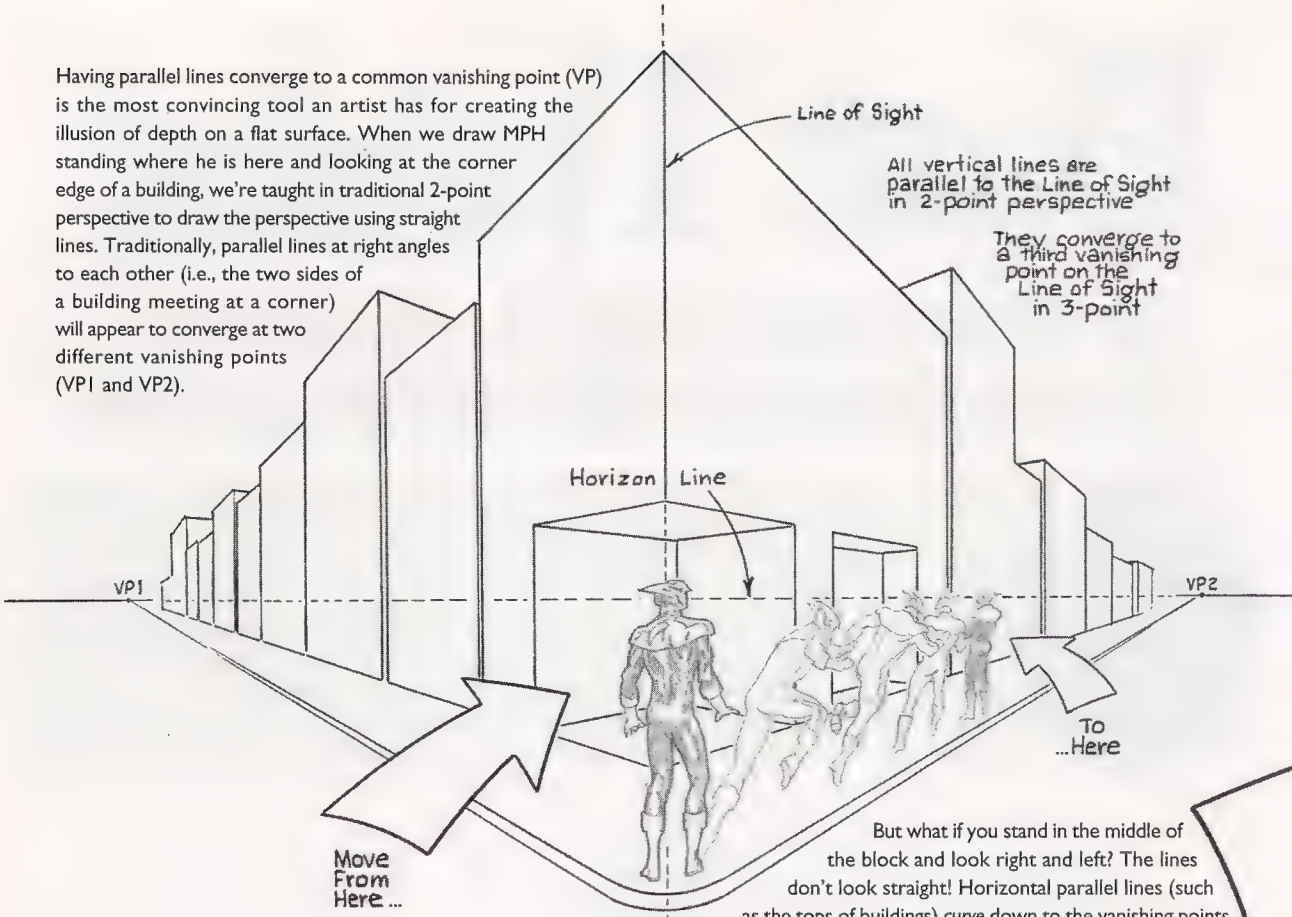


Why? It's possible that when the Earth's curvature is projected through the curved lens of the eye and onto the back curvature of the eyeball, we have an instinctive need to straighten it all out. Our brains process the curvature of the world into the straight lines of Euclidean geometry. (Eeww!)

Curvilinear perspective is not a radical new drawing technique, but rather a non-traditional way of *seeing*. I can prove lines are curved. Really! Just turn the page!



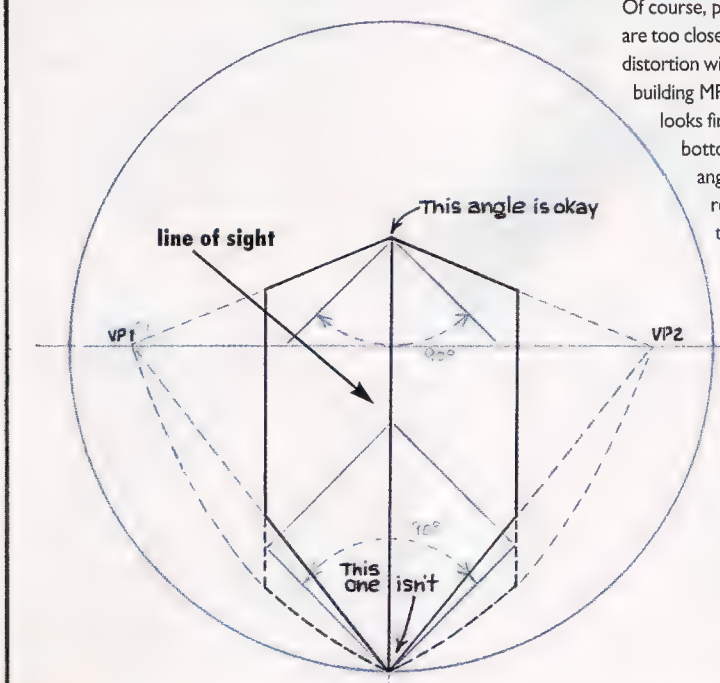
Having parallel lines converge to a common vanishing point (VP) is the most convincing tool an artist has for creating the illusion of depth on a flat surface. When we draw MPH standing where he is here and looking at the corner edge of a building, we're taught in traditional 2-point perspective to draw the perspective using straight lines. Traditionally, parallel lines at right angles to each other (i.e., the two sides of a building meeting at a corner) will appear to converge at two different vanishing points (VP1 and VP2).

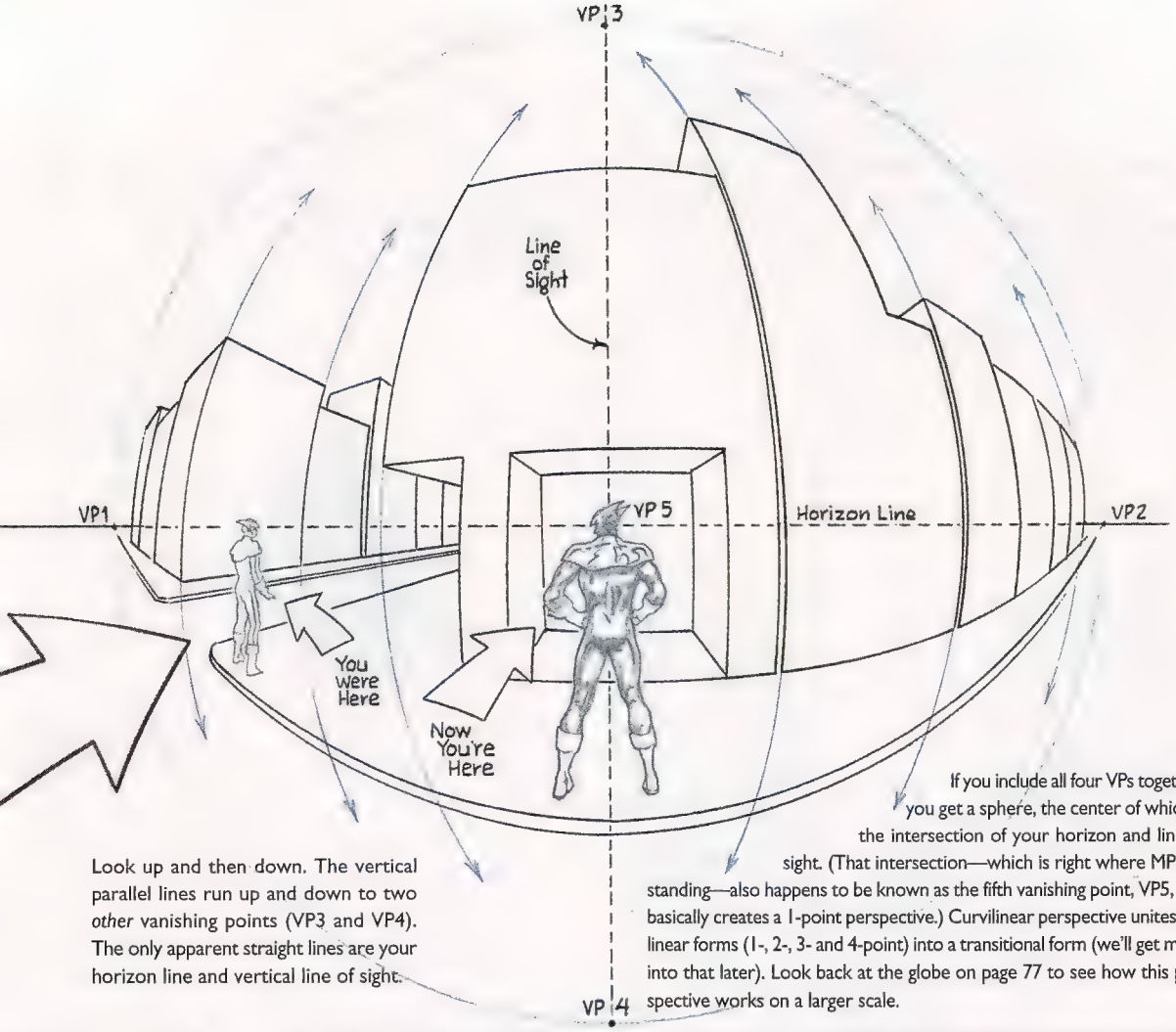


But what if you stand in the middle of the block and look right and left? The lines don't look straight! Horizontal parallel lines (such as the tops of buildings) *curve* down to the vanishing points (VP1 and VP2) on the horizon line. Try it! Go outside and look at some buildings.

Now, the diagram above shows the traditional way of drawing these scenes. But to be more dynamic (And realistic!), let's move on to the illustration at the right.

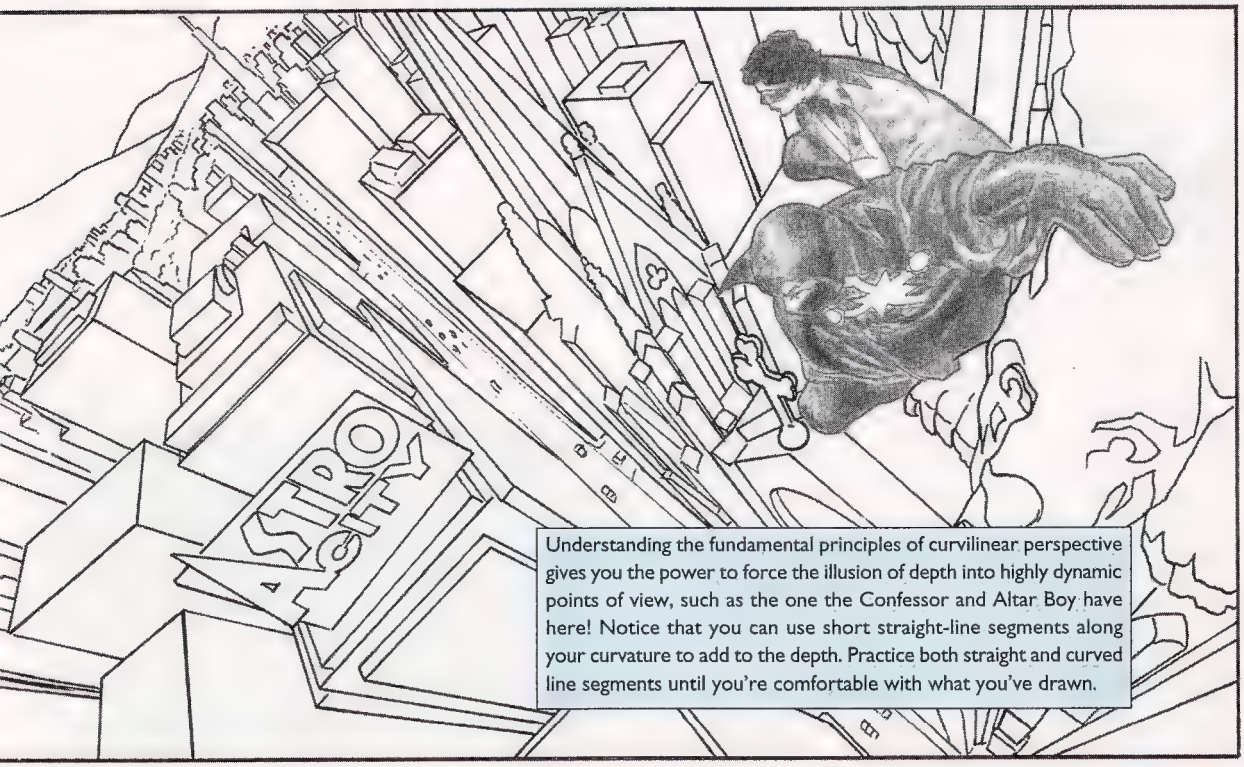
Of course, perspective can be *too* forced! In linear perspective, if the VPs are too close together and the angle between them is less than 90 degrees, distortion will result. Take a look at the diagram on the left—it's the same building MPH is looking at, directly above. The top part of this building looks fine because its angle is more than 90 degrees. The structure's bottom, however, will look a bit odd, mainly because it's at an angle of less than 90 degrees. Fear not. This distortion can be reduced and controlled if you use curved perspective to keep the angles wide enough (as shown in the curved dotted lines, which go from the two original VPs to the line of sight, and help to curve the building's bottom out).





Look up and then down. The vertical parallel lines run up and down to two *other* vanishing points (VP3 and VP4). The only apparent straight lines are your horizon line and vertical line of sight.

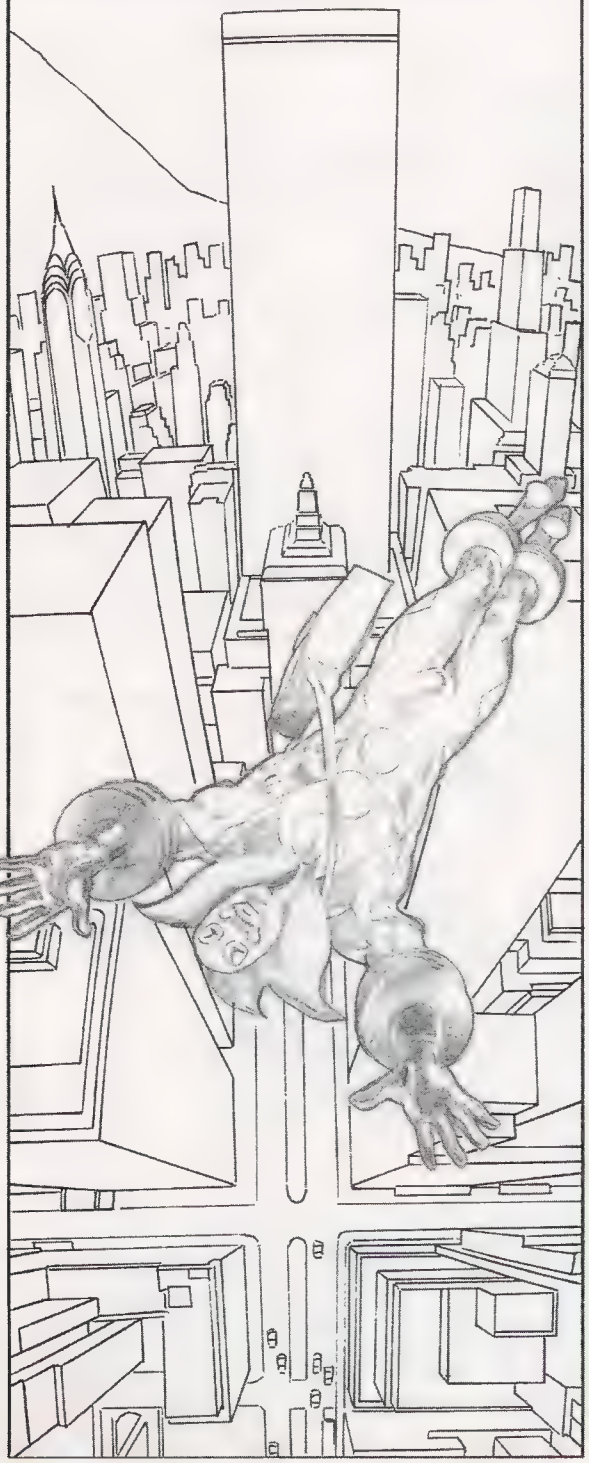
If you include all four VPs together, you get a sphere, the center of which is the intersection of your horizon and line of sight. (That intersection—which is right where MPH is standing—also happens to be known as the fifth vanishing point, VP5, and basically creates a 1-point perspective.) Curvilinear perspective unites the linear forms (1-, 2-, 3- and 4-point) into a transitional form (we'll get more into that later). Look back at the globe on page 77 to see how this perspective works on a larger scale.



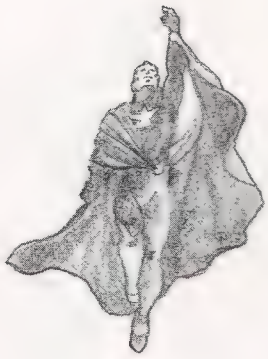
Understanding the fundamental principles of curvilinear perspective gives you the power to force the illusion of depth into highly dynamic points of view, such as the one the Confessor and Altar Boy have here! Notice that you can use short straight-line segments along your curvature to add to the depth. Practice both straight and curved line segments until you're comfortable with what you've drawn.

Transitional perspective within a single panel can be very dynamic! What's *transitional* perspective? Glad you asked. The street intersection at the bottom of this panel should be a 1-point perspective at the intersection of the line of sight and the horizon line. But it's actually the intersection of two lines of sight! Move your eyes upward and you see that the real horizon line is closer to the top. Now, rotate this magazine a quarter turn, keeping your eye on the intersection. What's happening here is that the horizon line is moving (or in a state of transition) along the outer curve of the curvilinear sphere. (Again, refer to the globe on page 77.)

Look down! Curvilinear perspective gives Jack-in-the-Box a real sense of drama no matter what angle you turn the page!



Look up! Curved lines gracefully focus attention on the figure of Samaritan flying over Astro City!



And that's just the beginning! I haven't even mentioned the complexity of accurately placing *windows* in a curved plane, but I hope this column's opened a door for you. It should at least give you a good head start into the world of dynamic perspective.

As for physically drawing the lines, you'll need a variety of large French curve templates and a flexible curve. Just have fun with it and you'll soon discover what I've discovered. When it comes to perspective in comics…keep it "kewl"! W

Brent Anderson's a curvy kind of guy. Be sure to check out his funky curvilinear perspective in Homage Comics' ongoing Astro City.

THE LATEST TOY NEWS, PHOTOS AND PRIZES!

ToyFare #9

THE TOY MAGAZINE

BATMAN & ROBIN
ANIMATED SERIES COVER & FREE POSTER

EXCLUSIVE FIGURE OFFER

SYNCH from GENERATION X

ON SALE IN MARCH

© Wizard Entertainment. ToyFare: The Toy Magazine ™ & © 1997 Wizard Entertainment. Batman & Robin ™ & © 1997 DC Comics. Synch & Generation X ™ & © 1997 Marvel Characters.

A Creative Ring Green Lantern Art Contest

contest

The folks at DC Comics have said that since Kyle Rayner, the new Green Lantern, is a graphic designer, he will never use his ring the same way twice. Well, that's a pretty tall order to fill and we think DC could use some help—namely yours.

Grand Prize (1):

One Greenie will win a Green Lantern statue sculpted by William Paquet, a page of original artwork by Darryl Banks from *Green Lantern* #79, a copy of *Green Lantern/Sentinel* #1 signed by Ron Marz and Paul Pelletier, and a *Green Lantern: A New Dawn* trade paperback signed by Marz and Banks.

First Prize (20):

Twenty almost-as-lucky Kylophiles will win a copy of *Green Lantern/Sentinel* #1 signed by Ron Marz and Paul Pelletier and a *Green Lantern: A New Dawn* trade paperback signed by Marz and Darryl Banks.

HOW DO YA WIN THIS LOOT?

We want you to rack your brains and draw Green Lantern using his ring in a way ***never before seen*** to defeat his archenemy, Dr. Light. Your entries will be judged by *GL* editor Kevin Dooley, so no slacking! The entry with the most creative, innovative and cool art will win the keen, green-jean prizes above!

This contest is sponsored by DC Comics and no evil will escape its sight, that's for sure.

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send to: A Creative Ring Green Lantern Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is March 31, 1998.

Legal By Lantern Light

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, DC Comics, their immediate families and the super-intelligent chimpanzees seeking to divest us of our pants. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: A Creative Ring Green Lantern Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 31, 1998.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Now, we commend you, read the fine print and be hyp-MO-tized. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than May 6, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about April 15, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after April 15, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: A Creative Ring Green Lantern Art Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

A Creative Ring Green Lantern Art Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

THE TOY CHEST

BY TOM PALMER JR.

TOY BIZ'S BIG COVERUP

Hot on the heels of its first Famous Covers assortment of 8-inch multi-articulated figures, Toy Biz has released photos of the next four Marvel characters to get the deluxe, Mego-style treatment. Who's up on the chopping block? Everybody's favorite patriotic superhero Captain America, the Norse God of Thunder Thor, Jean Grey's nasty Dark Phoenix persona and perennial bad guy Doctor Doom are all set to hit toy stores in April.

Like the initial Famous Covers figures, these guys feature detailed cloth costumes and multi-poseable bodies. Cap sports his shield, Thor has his winged helmet and hammer Mjolnir, Doom is outfitted head-to-toe in armor and Dark Phoenix has...ummm...lots of hair. Sorry, kiddies—but while the first batch of figures featured removable accessories, like Wolverine's mask and Spidey's velcro hood, this time around Toy Biz took a different tactic and sculpted Cap and Doom with non-removable cowl and mask.

And if that's not enough for ya, the next batch of characters is already in the planning stages. The third assortment, tentatively scheduled for the summer, will most likely include Daredevil, the Falcon, Mr. Sinister and the Black Widow.

Thor with Norse booties

Captain America with removable shield and giant chest star

Dark Phoenix: mutant or Jersey girl?

Photos courtesy of Toy Biz

BIG BLAST

Waaay back in *Wizard* #74, we gave you a look at Madman, one of the first action figures from Graphitti Designs' new Big Blast toy line. Well, work has finally been completed on Kevin Matchstick and Grendel, and we've got a sneak peek at 'em. The Matchstick (from *Mage*) figure is articulated at 14 points and comes with a glow-in-the-dark baseball bat, a cloth duffel bag, removable cloth trenchcoat, an extra set of hands and a replica Mage credit card. Grendel maxes out with an impressive 16 points of articulation, including points at the ankles and biceps, and comes with a forked battle staff, a skull and an extra set of hands to pose with his various accessories.

Look for these guys in comic and hobby stores in April. And in May, you can pick up the Madman accessory pack, which features an extra head with flight goggles and crash helmet for Snap City's hero, as well as a rocket pack and harness. These figures and accessories are only the tip of the iceberg as far as Graphitti's action figures are concerned, so keep your eyes open for more news soon!

Kevin Matchstick (left) and Grendel

Photo: Paul Schiraldi

Photo: Paul Schiraldi

AWESOME, DUDE

Is he just another Captain America rip-off or a legitimate superhero? Who cares! Now he's just a cool-looking action figure. Hot on the heels of its Prophet and Shaft figures, Awesome Toys is releasing an action figure of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's Fighting American (shown at left), recently revived courtesy of Rob Liefeld's Awesome Entertainment. This figure stands 6 inches tall, is articulated at the neck, shoulders and hips, and carries a shield and a flag that breaks apart into two battle staves. Featuring a sculpt courtesy of Glenn Wong, this figure makes for one damn fine-looking superhero.

Of course, there are also some inevitable variant editions of Fighting American, including a '50s version that comes with a battle-damaged shield and a deco that reflects Simon and Kirby's original Fighting American costume. Look for the Fighting American figure in comic and hobby stores this April.

Also in the works from Awesome are figures of a number of other characters from the Awesome comic book stable. Kaboom, Spellcaster from *The Coven* and Genie from the upcoming *Re-Gex* series are all set to blast into comic and hobby stores in June. And once six Awesome characters are complete, there's talk of an Awesome Universe multi-pack.

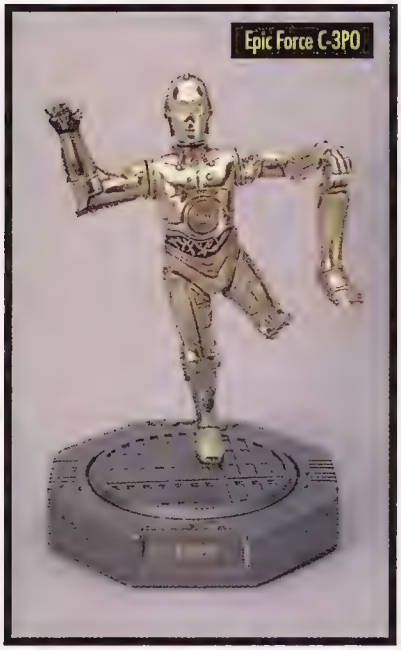
EVEN MORE STAR WARS!

Think you've seen enough new Star Wars toys yet? Well, Kenner keeps rolling these things out and fans keep demanding more, so we're gonna keep showing you the latest they've got!

In the new Epic Force line, Kenner's serving up deluxe versions of Boba Fett and C-3P0. This line features large figures in special collector-friendly display boxes, so if you're one of them collector-types you're bound to go all crazy for these figures. The Epic Force Boba is sculpted in a getting-ready-to-blast-Han-Solo pose right before the bounty hunter fell into the Sarlacc pit in "Return of the Jedi," while Threepio hobbles around on one leg, waiting for R2-D2 to fix the *Millennium Falcon*'s hyperdrive, from the end of "The Empire Strikes Back." Like the other figures in the Epic Force line, these two come with a special base that rotates via a thumb wheel, so you can view the figure from any angle while leaving the package in mint condition.

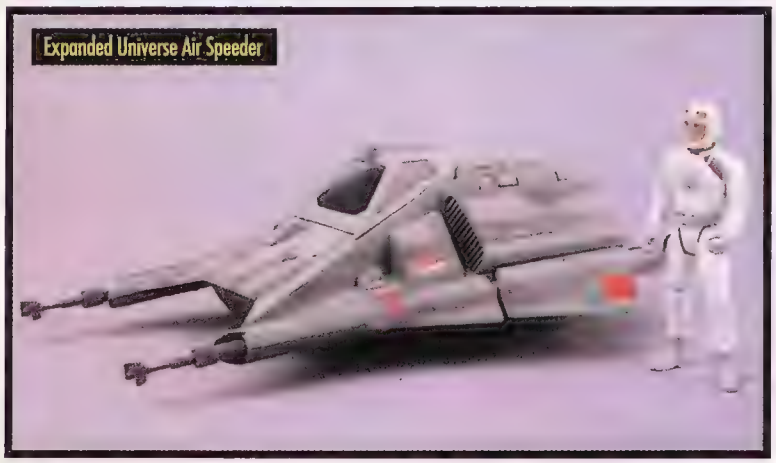
With Kenner's new Expanded Universe assortment, the company is mining the wealth of Star Wars universe comics, books and video games for inspiration. The first Expanded Universe offerings are based on pre-production sketches for various Star Wars vehicles and pilots, and include the Speeder Bike, Air Speeder (what would later become the Snow Speeders) and Cloud Car. Each vehicle is in scale with Kenner's other Star Wars vehicles and comes with an exclusive pilot figure.

Expanded Universe Speeder Bike


Epic Force C-3PO

Expanded Universe Cloud Car

Epic Force Boba Fett


Expanded Universe Air Speeder

Star Wars photos courtesy of Kenner

ANTARCTIC HEATS UP

If you've been impressed by Antarctic Press' Warrior Nun Areala action figure, then you're sure to flip over what the company's got planned for '98. In February, Cheetah, a character from Fred Perry's *Gold Digger*, hits stores, possibly paving the way for more figures based on the long-running comic series. A leather coat-clad Shotgun Mary is set for a March release, while Lillith, a Warrior Nun baddie, hits in April.

Also on the way from Antarctic later in '98, but not on a definite schedule yet, is Bob Burden's Flaming Carrot, London Night Studios' Razor and Ra, a character from *Stargods*, a new title from Antarctic's new imprint Conquest Studios.

Photo: Paul Schinaldi

From left: Shotgun Mary, Lillith and Cheetah

DON'T MISS THE GOAT

Just when you thought you'd seen everything, along comes one of the most revolutionary action figures of the year—Acclaim Comics' Goat action figure. Exploding off the pages of *Quantum and Woody*, this unarticulated figure is decked out with a real cloth cape and Fold Map accessory. As if that weren't enough to entice you, the back of the packaging features an all-new Quantum and Woody story by the series' creators Christopher Priest and MD Bright. Look for this figure in comic stores this April. W

ToyFare *assistant editor Tom Palmer Jr. thinks a Forbush Man action figure could lick a Goat action figure. Wait...ummm...*

Photo courtesy of Acclaim Comics

From the pages of *Quantum and Woody* comes the, uh, Goat inaction figure.

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
We're starting to sound like a broken record, but an Amalgam line with Dark Claw, Super Soldier, Dr. Strangefate and Iron Lantern would rule!

2) Thunderbolts (Marvel Heroes)
The hoax of the Marvel Universe would be Toy Biz's dream action figure line. Make each Bolt along with his villain identity in special two-packs for one of the swankiest toy lines ever.

3) Wonder Woman (DC Heroes)
A casting call has gone out for a new Wonder Woman TV show, so maybe a WW action figure isn't too far off. Give her a golden lasso and real rooted hair and every fanboy'll swoon.

4) Bastion (Marvel Heroes)
It's only a matter of time before this mysterious X-villain is immortalized in plastic. Of course, Bastion'll need a mutant containment unit and a cyborg Sentinel pal to make paste outta those rascally mutants.

5) Commissioner Gordon (DC Heroes)
Kenner's animated Batman line is starting up again, thanks to the new TV show, so it's the perfect time to make the commish. To ensure this figure's top-notch, give him a service revolver and a light up Bat-signal.

6) Oola (Star Wars)
Since there's only like two chicks in the Star Wars Universe, a figure of Jabba the Hutt's dancer would rack major ass all over the galaxy. This green-hued babe should be multi-poseable (for all them slinky dance moves) and come with a choker chain.

7) Odin (Marvel Heroes)
Thor and Loki's poppa, and all-around big muckety-muck, Odin would have to be made up to tower over all other figures. Give him a big throne, Gungnir (his trusty spear) and Thrudstok (his trusty mace) so he can beam Loki on the noggin.

8) Martian Manhunter (DC Heroes)
DC's *JLA* is one of comicdom's big hitters, so why isn't there a beefed-up and revitalized version of JLA mainstay Martian Manhunter? To make every fanboy nuts, this figure's gotta have a snap-on Martian vision blast and a cloth cape, dammit!

9) Lobo (DC Heroes)
His comic might not be ruling the rocks, but the main man recently guest-starred on the "Superman" animated series, so now's the time for a Lobo figure. All he needs is a big intergalactic motorcycle and fart when you squeeze him action feature.

10) Falcon (Marvel Heroes)
Captain America's ex-partner and former Avenger, the Falcon would make every fan's Marvel collection complete. This figure should have multi-poseable, detachable wings and come with a nifty little Redwing, his faithful falcon companion.

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

Top 10 Wish List
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920
Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

GRAND PRIZE

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials. Everyone gets a Thor 35th Anniversary laser sculpture, a Spider-Man laser mini-sculpture and a Silver Surfer laser mini-sculpture, while the Runner-Up also scores a Spidey 35th Anniversary laser sculpture. The talented Grand Prize Winner walks away with everything listed above, plus a Hulk 35th Anniversary laser sculpture *and* prototype Daredevil and Psylocke laser sculptures. Super work, people!

Many thanks to the Laser Mach people for the shiny prizes!

MORTAL KOMBAT'S RAIDEN

Brian Warnock of Fox River Grove, Ill.

So the "Mortal Kombat Annihilation" movie sucked. And yeah, Raiden was a sissy in that flick with an unbelievably cheesy, girlie haircut. But this figure, made from a Toy Biz Light-Up Gambit figure and a Toy Biz Ninja Wolverine, is the true Raiden that could whup Scorpion, Goro, Kintaro or Sub-Zero's ass any day.

RUNNER-UP

GRENDEL

Brad Simmons of Foster City, Calif.

The psycho killer from Hell, Grendel, was tooled from a Toy Biz Hyper-Tech Spider-Man, with laces made from cardboard and a staff created from that same cardboard and some sucker sticks (whatever the heck they are) glued together.

LEECH AND ARTIE

Mike Fichera of Secane, Pa.
Mike gets a big pat on the back and maybe an appointment to get his head examined for making figures NO ONE would ever make, Marvel's little mutant misfits Leech and Artie!!! Oh yeah, and he made them from Fisher Price Little People.

NEW TITANS

Charles Daugherty of San Francisco, Calif.
Did you know these Titans were 10 inches each? Tempest is a mixture of a Toy Biz 10-inch Wolverine body and Toy Biz Kraven arms, legs and head. Arsenal is composed of a Toy Biz Deadpool body and a Toy Biz Blaze head. Nightwing is a Toy Biz Wolvie body, a Toy Biz Mr. Sinister head and Toy Biz Kraven arms and legs. Darkstar is a Toy Biz Rogue—literally. And Starfire is a cross between a Toy Biz She-Hulk and a Toy Biz Xena.

STORM, CAPTAIN MAR-VELL AND MAGIK

David Mann of Richmond, Va.
Both Storm and Magik were born from Toy Biz clear Invisible Woman figures, while this splendid-looking Captain Mar-Vell is a repainted Toy Biz Iolaus.

RED CLAW

Donald Deveav of San Francisco, Calif.
Of all things, this obscure character Red Claw was formed from a very obscure substance...a McDonald's Happy Meal Catwoman figure.

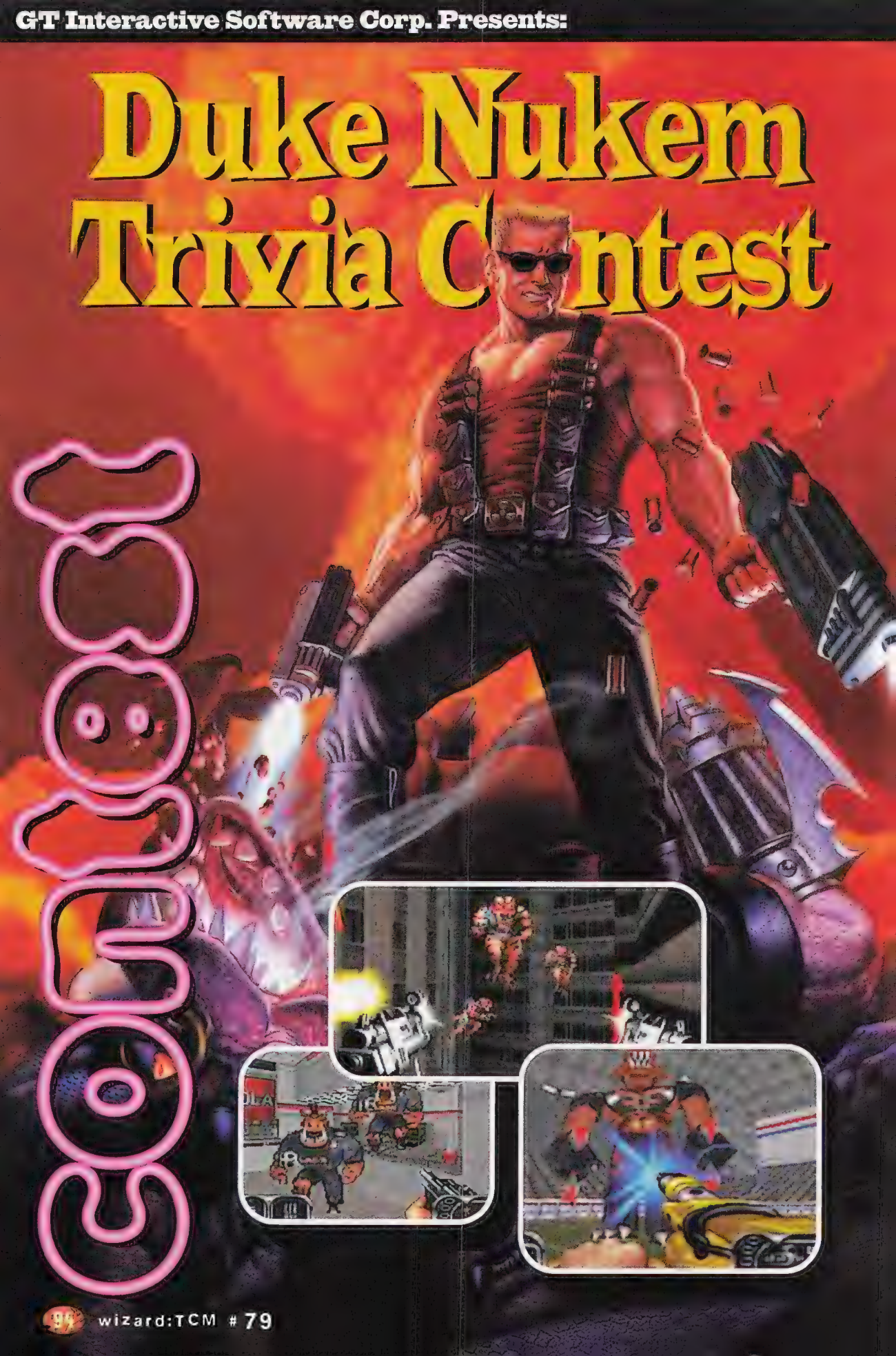
HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Entertainment
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

GT Interactive Software Corp. Presents:

Duke Nukem Trivia Contest



So what do you do? Just answer the three *Duke* trivia questions from either the Nintendo 64 list or the PlayStation list below...

THE QUESTIONS

N64™

1. What is the name of the Weapons Store in Level 2?
2. What does the screen say when you release a Babe from bondage?
3. How many multiplayer modes exist in *Duke Nukem 64*?

PlayStation™

1. In *Nightmare Zone*, what are the Pig Cops wearing?
2. In *Duke Fiction*, what's on the movie poster instead of Uma Thurman?
3. In *Alien Rendezvous*, what's at the end of the level?

Answer either the N64 or PlayStation questions correctly and you'll get a chance to be randomly picked to win these prizes!

Grand Prize (1): The lucky winner gets a Nintendo 64 or PlayStation game system, a *Duke Nukem 3D* video game (for the N64 or PlayStation), a Duke Nukem action figure and a Duke Nukem T-shirt!

First Prize (20): Each first prize winner gets a (N64 or PlayStation) *Duke Nukem 3D* video game, a Duke Nukem action figure and a Duke Nukem T-shirt.

This contest is sponsored by GT Interactive Software Corp.

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and ship it off to: Duke Nukem Trivia Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is March 30, 1998.

Lawyers' Stuff

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, GT Interactive Software Corp. and their immediate families. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card with the answers to the trivia questions. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Duke Nukem Trivia Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of GT Interactive and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 30, 1998.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for incomplete, lost, late, postage due, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than May 4, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected no later than April 13, 1998. To obtain a copy of the official rules, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Wizard Entertainment, Duke Nukem Contest, Official Rules, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920.

N64 is a trademark of Nintendo of America, Inc. PlayStation is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment. All federal, state and local laws apply.

For a list of winners, available after April 13, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Duke Nukem Trivia Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The Duke Nukem Trivia Entry Form

DEADLINE IS MARCH 30, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Answers for: (Check one) N64 ☐ PlayStation ☐

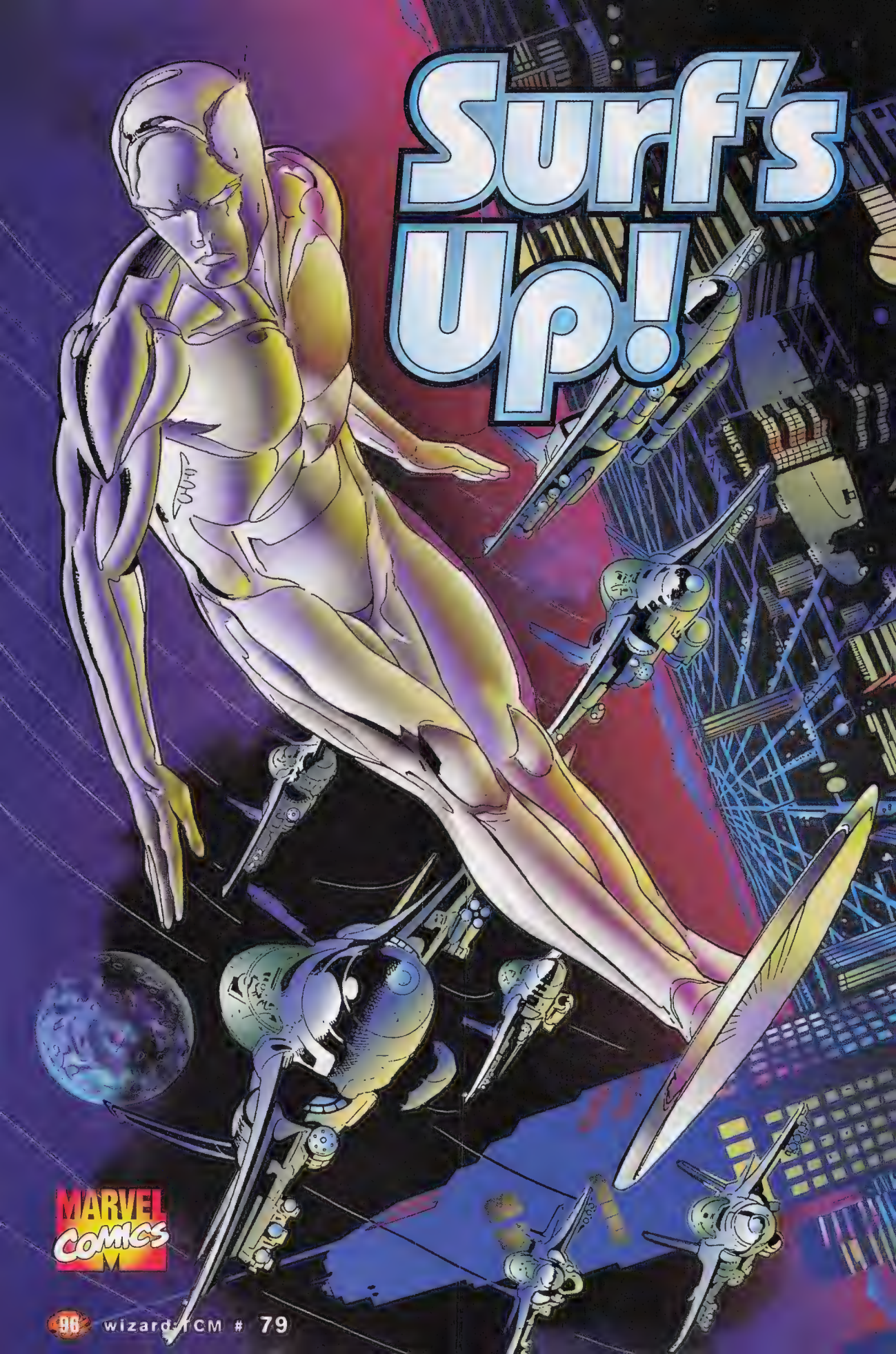
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

If I won the Grand Prize, I'd prefer: (Check one) N64 ☐ PlayStation ☐

Surf's Up!



Former herald of the planet gobbler Galactus and one of the Fantastic Four's greatest and most mysterious allies, he is also one of the most powerful characters in the mighty Marvel Universe. He's the Silver Surfer, Sentinel of the Spaceways, and he's shooting the cosmic curl straight to you in the latest and greatest #1/2 issue brought to you by *Wizard* and Marvel.

Dudes around the cosmos will be scrambling to get this exclusive Silver Surfer story. So don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime chance. Fill out that order form completely, insert three U.S. greenbacks into the envelope, wax down that board and get yourself on down to the post office and mail it in! (You can order up to two issues per certificate!)

Within the *Silver Surfer* #1/2, you'll find these goodies:

- **A brand-new story written by Tom DeFalco (*Amazing Spider-Man*) and drawn by Ariel Olivetti (*JLA: Paradise Lost*)!**
- **The introduction of a brand-new she-villain, Sympira!**
- **Behind-the-scenes sketchbook material! See what makes the Surfer fly!**
- **And the most cosmic part of it all—this is a Silver Surfer story you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive comic is available through this one-time *Wizard* offer only!**

Don't delay! Get that order in yesterday! Limit two orders per certificate!

The Real Power Cosmic

No reproductions of this certificate will be accepted. This certificate must be sent in the accompanying envelope, limit two issues per certificate. Remit by check or money order only. Canadian orders remit $4.00, other foreign orders remit $6.00. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Make all checks payable to Wizard Press. Offer good only while supply lasts. Please allow eight to 12 weeks for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Press is notified in writing by April 22, 1998.

THIS OFFER EXPIRES APRIL 22, 1998.

JUNK DRAWER

By David Borak and the *Wizard* staff

All items, except where noted, can be found in your friendly neighborhood comic shop. If you can't find a product, ask your favorite comic shop owner to order it for you.

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

DAWN OF A NEW STATUE

Dawn statue

Joseph Michael Linsner's heroine Dawn will have her own statue released in May. This 12-inch statue ($195) features Dawn with a halo, in red armor, astride the shoulders of her lover, the Horned God. The cold-cast statue was sculpted and fully painted by Randy Bowen, and will be limited to initial orders received, so contact your local comic book retailer to order one.

CHOCOLATE BONES

Satisfy your sweet tooth with the new Bone Bars ($30) from Kitchen Sink Press. These chocolate bars feature characters from Jeff Smith's award-winning comic *Bone*. Each box contains 15 chocolate bars with three color wrapper designs and three different tastes: Fone Bone (milk chocolate), Smiley Bone (milk chocolate with nuts) and Phoney Bone (milk chocolate with crispy rice). These bars come in a heavy-duty, cigar-style box covered with full-color art by Smith, which can be bought separately ($10). Look for it this February.

Chocolate Bone Bars

X-Men Iris Print

X-CELLENT PRINT

This February, watch out for the X-Men Limited Edition Iris Print ($150) from WildStorm Fine Arts, featuring artwork by Joe Quesada. Printed on Arches watercolor paper, the total print size (including border) is 16" X 21". This baby is limited to just 300 units and comes signed by Quesada himself!

KINGDOM COMES IN TWO FORMS

Based on the blockbuster comic book mini-series by Mark Waid and Alex Ross, DC Comics and Warner Publishing present the *Kingdom Come* novel and audio drama.

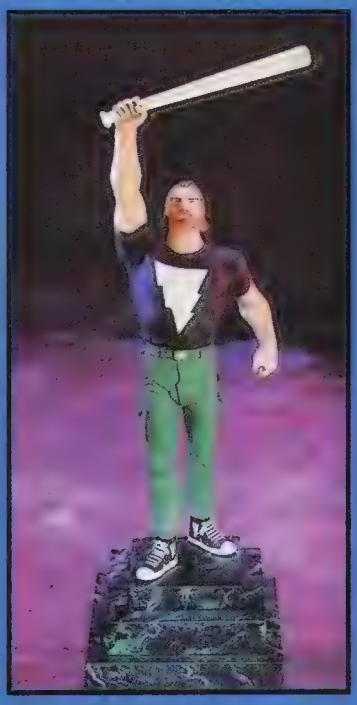
The hardcover *Kingdom Come* novel ($20) tells a

futuristic story of the old guard—Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman—fighting against a younger generation of rowdy, violent superheroes. The 256-page novel is written by Elliot S! Maggin and features original full-color and black-and-white artwork by Alex Ross. The *Kingdom Come* audio drama ($17) is adapted by John Whitman and features a full cast of voices to recreate the comic book story. It comes with two cassettes, with a complete running time of 120 minutes. Look for the *Kingdom Come* novel and audio drama in bookstores everywhere this February.

Products of the Month

HELLBENT AND HELLBOY

Bowen Designs is whipping up two particularly neat cold-cast resin statues for March and April. Kevin Matchstick (below left, from *Mage*, $140) and Mike Mignola's Hellboy ($195). Matchstick is 14 inches tall, and comes fully painted with a custom-designed base. Sculpted by Randy Bowen and based on designs by Wagner, the Mage statue comes in a full-color display box and is available in March. The Hellboy statue stands 16 inches tall, comes fully painted and is available in April. Each of these statues is limited to just 1,000 pieces. Signed editions of the statues with added extras ($200—Mage, $250—Hellboy) are available through Bowen Designs, at (503) 786-0542.



BUILDING A BETTER MOUSEPAD

Now you can roll your computer's mouse over your favorite superheroes with the DC Comics Mousepads ($15.95 each). The three mousepads feature the faces of Batman, Green Lantern and Wonder Woman (one face per mousepad) with art by Brian Stelfreeze, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin, and José Luis García-Lopéz, respectively. These high-quality hard-topped mousepads measure 8" X 9 1/2" each. They're available this March.

DC mousepads

MAN-EATING MODEL

Horizon Hobbies presents the Poison Ivy 1/8 scale vinyl model kit ($59.95). The kit features the irresistible plant queen kneeling atop a man-eating plant display base. This 11 1/2-inch model (with base) comes unassembled. You can find it in model and hobby shops everywhere this February.

Poison Ivy model

Lady Death wall relief

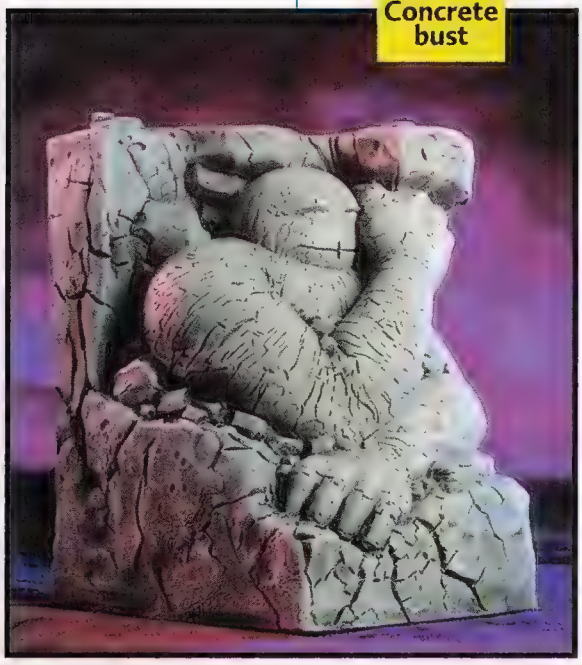
DEATH ON THE WALL

Chaos! and Moore Creations are bringing the demonic Lady Death to walls everywhere with the Lady Death Wall Relief ($99). The cold-cast porcelain relief sports Ms. Death with a huge, bloody sword (à la *Lady Death* #1); it ships in February, is 10" X 13" and can be hung from any wall in the land.

A CONCRETE BUST

The lovable mug of Concrete can now be yours with the Concrete Bust by Bowen Designs ($50). This mini-bust of Paul Chadwick's Concrete is 5 1/2 inches tall, fully painted, sculpted by Randy Bowen, based on designs by Chadwick and limited to only 1,000 pieces. Look for it in March.

Concrete bust



A RANCOROUS BRONZE

Dark Horse Comics and Bowen Designs will be putting out the monstrous Rancor statue. This bronze statue ($3,000) is 15 inches tall, weighs 25 pounds and rests on a black Spanish-marble base. This rendition of the doomed beast from "Return of the Jedi" is limited to 50 numbered copies and comes with a signed certificate of authenticity. The Rancor bronze is available now; contact Dark Horse Comics at (503) 652-8815 for ordering information.

THE MAN OF SEQUINS

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a shiny Superman shirt! Currently available only at Warner Bros. Studio stores, the Sequined Superman shirt ($175) features the symbol of the Man of Steel on a background of, you guessed it, blue sequins. It's what Superman would wear if he was playing in Las Vegas.

Rancor bronze statue

HEY! Are you a company putting out some super-spankerific good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like *The Son of Satan Sings Englebert Humperdinck*, Madman's Home Sanity Test and Medusa the Inhuman's Hair Spray? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our equally super-spanktaceous "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like to feature previews of statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

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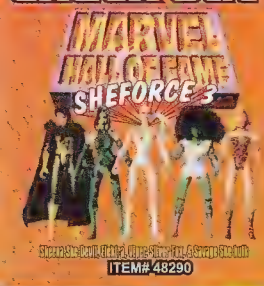
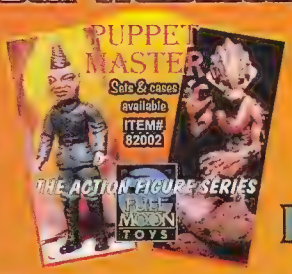
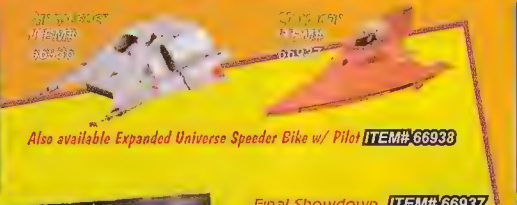






JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown, Greg Orlando and Marc Wilkofsky

DREAM GAMES 1998

Let's face it—the best comic book-based video games have yet to be made. Sure, it's fun to stomp Marvel superheroes in Capcom's *Marvel Super-Heroes* or blow holes in the X-Men in GT Interactive's *X-Men: The Ravages of Apocalypse*, but the sad truth is that most comic book-related video games are $40-plus disappointments.

That's where the crack *Wizard* video game staff comes in. We might not be able to create our own video games, but we can darn sure whip up a holy trinity of games we'd want to see made—and how we'd want to see them brought to life.

Amalgam Action: Marvel vs. DC

Real Game Most Similar To:
Street Fighter vs. X-Men

How cool would an *Amalgam Action* video game be? This adaptation of the 1996 *Marvel vs. DC* crossover series (forget about any of the mostly forgettable follow-ups) would let you and your battle-game-loving buddies become the two companies' main superheroes—like Superman, Batman, Spider-Man and Wolverine—and decide for yourselves who's better by fighting each other. When one of you is walloped, the best part of the game comes in: The winning hero takes on the loser's powers and weapons for future battles! Imagine Ka-Zar using Wonder Woman's lasso against a stretching Batman, or a very fast Hulk going at it with a weather-controlling Man of Steel. Gambit flying! Aquaman shooting ice-blasts! With eight heroes per side, how many combinations can there be?

To make the game fair, each acquired power or weapon can only be used once per match. And you can take the power-adding option off, if you just want to prove your favorite hero is unbeatable as is! Two more special bonuses: Amalgam Option lets you play as existing Amalgam characters (from Spider-Boy to Dark Claw), and the final winner of any game gets to watch his opponent's Earth explode. C'mon, Big Two, get this one going!

Captain America Saves the Universe

Real Game Most Similar To:
Tomb Raider II

Take control of America's spunkiest hero Captain America in a 3-D fighting adventure pitting Cap against supervillains, space aliens and the Red Skull himself. Along the way, Cap will travel to the nation's capital to save the president's life, storm an alien spaceship manned by shape-shifting Skrulls to prevent an invasion, battle the Masters of Evil—who've stolen America's fabled shield—and kick the bejeezus out of the assembled forces of A.I.M. and HYDRA. The game's final stage would take Cap into the heart of the Red Skull's heavily manned fortress for an all-out battle with his arch-nemesis.

Captain America would look like, but more importantly, *play* like Eidos' *Tomb Raider II*. Cap, like *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft, would have a near-endless supply of acrobatic moves, as well as various punches, kicks and throws. After recovering Cap's shield, players will have to learn how to use it to deflect bullets and, alternately, how to throw it so it'll return to its rightful owner.

Throw in guest appearances by Cap's Avenger friends (Thor, Iron Man and Quicksilver), as well as enemy sub-bosses like the robotic Sleepers, Batroc the Leaper and Arnim Zola, and the result would be a monster hit.

Legion of Monsters

Real Games Most Similar To:
Splatterhouse, Fighting Force

Legion of Monsters would be based on the short-lived '70s team of Marvel's most popular supernatural heroes. Players could choose to fight with one of four (a multi-player option would be a must) ultra-creepy cats: Ghost Rider, Morbius, Werewolf by Night or the Man-Thing. Each member of the Legion would have a unique fighting style and superhuman powers, as well as certain exploitable weaknesses. For example, Morbius could replenish his health by taking blood from his human victims, but would be vulnerable to holy water and wooden stakes.

The game would unfold in classic 3-D fighting game style, with each monster rendered à la the fighters in the classic hits *Tekken 2* or *Virtua Fighter*. *Monsters* would be set in a series of progressively creepier tombs, sewers, castles and ruins, and each scene would be littered with plenty of weapons.

This game's unique feature would be its open-ended plot. Players would quest to recover the fabled *Book of the Darkhold*, racing against Dracula and his evil minions, who also seek the book. Each scenario would contain plenty of enemies to fight, but would also be filled with mysteries to solve, artifacts to discover and alternate paths to travel. W

A Marvel vs. DC game would kick ass!

IT'S YOUR MOVE

• Special moves and secret codes •

Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha
for the Sony PlayStation

• Four New Fighters

Enter this nifty code, and you'll get access to four extra Street Fighters: Cycloid Beta, Cycloid Gamma, Killer Hakuto and Evil Ryu.

1) Go to the Mode Select Screen.
2) Highlight the "Practice" option.
3) Press Select, Up, Right, Down, Right and Select on the D-pad.
4) If done correctly, a message will appear on the bottom of the screen reading, "Here Comes a New Challenger."

Dragon Ball GT: Final Bout
for the Sony PlayStation

• New Fighters Aplenty

Final Bout lets you battle with 10 characters, but input these commands, and you can choose from a whopping 16 *Dragon Ball* characters.

1) Go to the Title Screen.
2) Press Right, Left, Down, Up, Right, Left, Down, Down and Up.
3) A sound will play to indicate the code has been successfully entered.

IT CAME FROM THE PC

This 'Scud' is No Dud

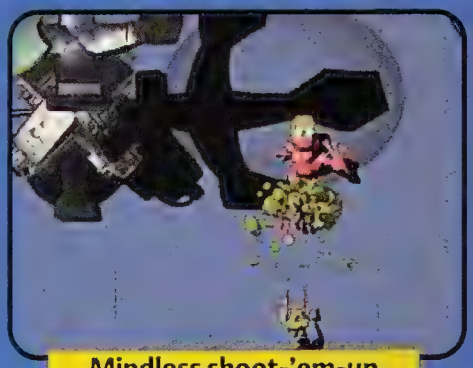
By Dan DiGiacomo

Looking for a dose of mindless, frenetic, shoot-'em-up action? Then this *Scud*'s for you. Based on the latest exploits of Rob Schrab's popular disposable assassin, Segasoft's *Scud* is the latest in a recent resurgence of top-down shooters à la the classic *Smash TV*. The game's storyline loosely mimics that of the underground comic series: Scud is a robot assassin designed to self-destruct upon completion of his singular objective—the destruction of his primary target. As in the comic, Scud opts to avoid killing his target in order to lengthen his lifespan.

Scud: Industrial Evolution offers two play modes, solo play and multi-player via an Internet connection. Single-player missions fall into two categories: hostage missions, in which Scud must locate the primary target and lead him or her to safety, and solo missions, where the sole objective is to blast away all opposition. The multi-player option allows players to get together with up to 15 friends (or enemies) for a cyberspace shoot-out in any of the game's many levels. Multi-play options include Deathmatch (one-on-one confrontation), Capture the Flag (team play) and Hot Potato (free-for-all fragfest). Players can assume the role of Scud, his green twin Oswald, or the bouncing S.A.M. (Superior Alien Military), each of which offers customizable controls and different attack options. All three characters are offered a host of cool power-ups and weapons, such as Ricocheting Bullets, the Turtle Attack, which slows enemies, and the Hologram Decoy, which, as its name suggests, projects a hologram duplicate of the hero to confuse pursuers.

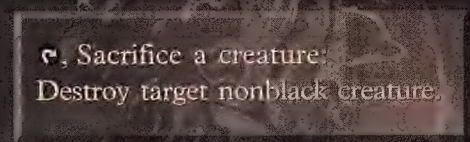
The clean graphics and character animation smoothly capture the cartoonish, gestural feeling and movement of Scud and his various mutant and robotic opponents. The colorful, maze-like levels are well-designed and offer increasing complexity and diversity, taking players from the depths of the ScudCo factory to the innards of an eerie funhouse. Also noteworthy is the attention to detail in the levels; each locale has its own unique set of traps, pitfalls, and unique villains such as Brain Grizzly, Chuck Brown and the Zombie T-Rex. However, the gameplay tends to become somewhat tedious upon repeated playing. While a breath of fresh air amid the recent onslaught of first-person shooters, the game doesn't offer enough interaction or variance of play to maintain prolonged interest. Also, inexplicably, there is no save game feature; rather, the player is given a password upon completion of each level. The greatest potential here lies in the multi-player option, particularly since it's one of the first games offered through Sega's new Heat gaming network. *Industrial Evolution* includes a three-month trial membership to the fledgling service, and promises that players will never have far to look for a human counterpart to blow away.

While not groundbreaking, *Scud: Industrial Revolution* offers players the unique opportunity to step into the shoes of everyone's favorite robotic assassin for some good, clean fun and wild action.



Mindless shoot-'em-up action makes *Scud* a winner.

There are no mercies here.



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THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from *Wizard* Editors Brian Cunningham, Andrew Kardon and Tom R. Root

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST · 5 EXCELLENT · 4 GOOD · 3 SO-SO · 2 UGH · 1 CRAPOLA

X-FACTOR

The shallow end of the mutant gene pool

Issues Reviewed: #134-#140
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Howard Mackie, Jeff Matsuda, Art Thibert and various fill-in artists
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Formerly the government's sanctioned band of superpowered mutants, X-Factor faked its demise to escape Uncle Sam's watchful eye. Now the rogue team of Forge, Mystique, Polaris, Wildchild, Strong Guy and Shard is setting its own agenda.

The Good: Veteran X-characters manage some dramatic moments. When reluctant one-time team member Sabretooth finally tore off his restraining collar to stalk his captors in issue #136, the sense of dread was well handled. And Mystique's political behind-the-scenes scheming stands out.

The Bad: This book is lost. No longer a government superteam, X-Factor has no purpose, no mission, no goal, no direction—and it shows. The book is a swamp of endless stop-and-start plots spinning lazily without resolution. There's never a payoff with no sign one will ever arrive. For instance, the romance between Forge and Mystique, unfolding for what seems like forever, is so dreadfully hesitant it might as well not exist. Wildchild's flirtatious friendship with Shard has stalled, sputtered and downright stopped. This is a book that shifts into cruise control until the next X-crossover.

Compounding the problem, particularly for newer readers, is the utter lack of explanation when past storylines drag through the title. For example, exactly who is that boy Mystique visits in disguise? Does he have any connection to the senator Mystique has duped into believing she's his wife? Why's Havok a bad guy? Why's Madrox the Multiple Man not returning to the team?

The directionless storylines are joined by a roster of unfulfilling and half-baked characters whose potential is barely tapped. Shard is yet another displaced futuristic mutant who's really a holographic projection searching for…something (we're never told her purpose in all seven issues we reviewed). Wildchild is merely a watered-down Sabretooth Jr. and a ninny, to boot—when Mystique pointlessly toys with his emotions in #136, you don't even feel for the dope. And what makes the cast all the blander is dull, monotonous dialogue; there's nothing distinguishing the personalities of Polaris from Shard from Forge.

The Buzz: Insiders at Marvel have hinted that this book, like its mutant sibling *Excalibur*, will get canceled before much longer…

The Skinny: …and we wouldn't shed any tears. *X-Factor* is all frivolous filler awaiting the next mutant crossover, further watering down Marvel's stable of X-titles. With its current non-direction, there is absolutely no good reason for this book to exist.

Who is this kid? How does Mystique know him? Who's his grandma? Why do we have to ask these questions?

Like other plots in X-Factor, the "romance" between Mystique (left) and Forge is so hesitant, it might as well not exist.

The Verdict: 1 CRAPOLA

WONDER WOMAN

Is this Amazon Byrned out?

Issues Reviewed: #121-#129
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creator: John Byrne
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Growing up on the paradise island of Themyscira, Princess Diana was chosen to represent the Amazons as Wonder Woman and spread peace throughout "Man's World." She recently died, was resurrected by the Greek gods and transformed into a goddess, while her mother, Hippolyta, has taken up the role of Wonder Woman on Earth.

The Good: Diana is an honorable heroine, who walks tall, commands respect and has a deep passion for helping others. She even kept this characteristic when she became a goddess, defying Athena's orders to not intercede when she saved three humans' lives (issue #129).

When the JLA showed up at Diana's bedside (#125), all the characters were handled beautifully. The rookie Green Lantern expressed his helplessness, Superman acted like a concerned big brother and even though Batman didn't say a word, you could feel his heartache.

There's a strong Greek mythological feel to this book. It's impossible to forget that the gods are heavily involved in WW's life.

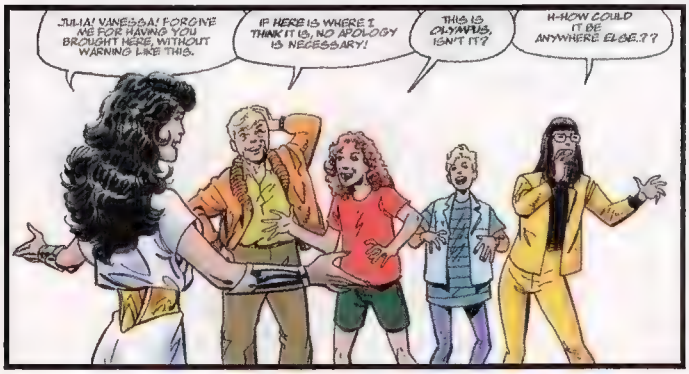
The Bad: This book is just really boring. Besides being unnecessarily wordy (check out the verbose word balloons on page 10 of #122), the storyline doesn't go anywhere quickly enough to keep our interest. The only main thread is Diana's transcendence to goddesshood, but it takes too long to get there, and there's tons of tangents along the way including Etrigan the Demon's interference, Artemis' attempt to kill Etrigan and Doctor Zeul's mind-transference experiments (#126).

Adding to the runaround is a supporting cast that's so huge (we count over a dozen), you need a scorecard to keep track! (And that's not even counting all the Greek gods!) And what a terrible supporting cast it is. The teenaged Cassie (a.k.a. the new Wonder Girl) is whiny and becomes even more annoying when Zeus gives her superpowers on a whim! Jason Blood (a.k.a. Etrigan) and his associates seem out of place in the storyline, and then there's people like Helena Sandsmark, Vanessa and Julia Kapatelis; besides not caring about these flat characters, you have no idea who they are and how they "support" WW!

The art itself is sketchy, with characters' faces oftentimes so similar it's hard to tell them apart. (On page one of #126, in fact, the female Professor Kapatelis actually looks like a man!) And while the backgrounds are mostly pretty detailed, the artist only does backgrounds about half the time.

The Buzz: Since Wonder Woman's involvement in *JLA* and her death/resurrection, fans have been taking note of this book.

The Skinny: Given John Byrne's legendary body of work, the expectations of any book he touches are unfairly high. But in these nine issues of *Wonder Woman* he failed to deliver with a plodding storyline, way too many side characters, an enormous amount of text and sketchy art.



Wonder Woman tends to get unnecessarily wordy (And look—no background art!).

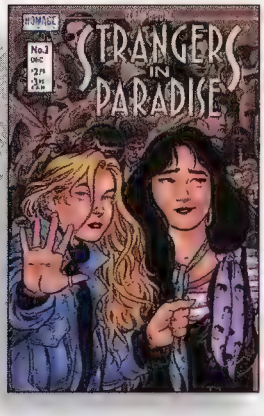
Too many supporting characters help bog down Wonder Woman.

The Verdict: 2 UGH

THE SKINNY

STRANGERS IN PARADISE

No trouble in this paradise

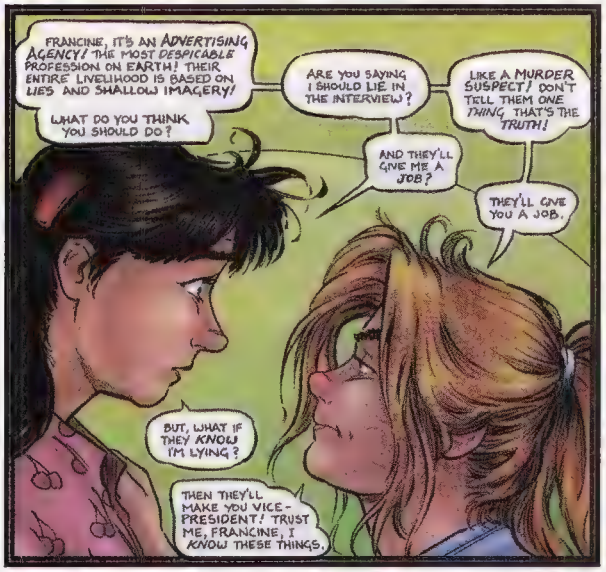


Issues Reviewed: #1-#10 (Third Series)
Genre: Crime/romance for mature readers
Publisher: Image/Homage (#1-#8), Abstract Studios (#9-#10)
Creator: Terry Moore
Price/Frequency: $2.75/Every six weeks

What You Need to Know: Best friends Katchoo and Francine love each other very much—heck, they might even decide they're *in* love, if life would stop chucking curve balls at them. But there's always someone coming between them, whether it's the dishonest, but wishy-washy dope David or Katchoo's old employer from her dark past, billionaire call-girl madam Darcy Parker.

The Good: The book sails on the strength of its unique, realistic characters. Katchoo and Francine deeply resonate as multifaceted, fleshed-out characters, expressing the same thoughts and fears you yourself might have. It's all thanks to solid writing and often-brilliant dialogue; we'd go so far to say that Francine, in particular, is the best-written female character in comics. At its best, the book's characters are like your closest friends, making it a joy to visit them issue to issue.

The interplay between cast members is easy and natural. Even seemingly mundane interaction, such as Katchoo's pep talk as Francine heads to a job interview in issue #2, is fresh and engaging. They're like real people you just can't get enough of.



The plot unfolds evenly, with steadily building suspense leaving you wanting more. Moore knows how to end an issue, whether it's silly (Francine locked in a closet at the end of #4) or shocking (Katchoo's plummet to certain doom as #8 closes), which only makes the wait for next issue all the more unbearable.

The expressive art complements the dynamic dialogue perfectly. It's cartoony and realistic all at the same time, capturing each mood and nuance demanded of characters this rich. This is sequential storytelling at its finest.

The Bad: With any landscape this beautiful, there's a tendency to want to mine it again and again. The crime plot of this third series rehashes that of earlier issues, revisiting similar scenarios and characters that have already had the spotlight. The evil Darcy Parker is back…but weren't we finished with her a long time ago? Katchoo flipping out in a screaming fit was powerful the first few times, but her character loses our sympathy with each new, grating tantrum. And the only reason the whiny, repetitive David is even *in* this series anymore, it seems, is to reunite and break up with Katchoo *ad nauseam*.

And while the art channels personality with near-perfection, sometimes different characters can appear quite similar, especially in the current black-and-white format. It's an unwanted distraction.

The Buzz: Moore is self-publishing again and on a regular schedule. Let's hope a proposed animated series for HBO does nothing to distract him from the comics.

The Skinny: *Strangers in Paradise* tells some of the best-written, most interesting stories in comics, with fantastically realized characters. Despite treading familiar territory, Moore still manages to keep readers guessing.

The interplay between Francine (left) and Katchoo is fresh and natural.

The return of Darcy Parker (left) spotlights a similar story from SiP's previous series, but it's still a good tale.

The Verdict: 5 EXCELLENT

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PICKS

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN FEBRUARY

ASTRO CITY #13

THE AVENGERS #3

TITLES DENOTED WITH AN **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

AKIKO #23

SIRIUS Robots of the world, revolt! Everyone's favorite bucket o' bolts, Gax, has become the Abraham Lincoln of the robot set, leading a metallic army against the evil slavemaster Yark. When the revolution comes, Yark's dealt a deathblow, but before passing, reveals that the robots—and the space station they're on—are gonna self-destruct in 24 hours. Uh oh. By Mark Crilley. **$2.50**

AQUAMAN #43

DC COMICS Giants walk the Earth, and one of 'em is planning to stomp on Superman Red and Aquaman's collective guts. When Cerne the Celtic giant tramples his way to the Atlantean City Thierna Na Oge, our heroes might end up as hero McNuggets trying to stop the rampage. This ish is part of DC's mondo "Millennium Giants" crossover. By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.95**

ASTRO CITY #13

HOMAGE/IMAGE The cartoon lion, Loony Leo, was brought to life in the 1940s. Now his story, the ultimate tale (pardon the pun) of a "stranger in a strange land," is about to come to life. Not only must Leo learn to live in a world populated by superheroes, but he's gonna have to deal with making the transition from fiction to flesh and blood. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. "We get to see what [Loony's] life was like through Astro City history," Busiek says, "from his origin to the question of whether a cartoon character brought to life is property of the studio or an actual person with his own rights. It's sort of Astro City as experienced by the ultimate outsider, somebody who was invented rather than born, and what life's been like for him over the decades he's been alive." **$2.50**

THE AVENGERS #3

MARVEL Sad but true: The Avengers, Earth's Mightiest Heroes, are stuck in an alternate timeline/dimension straight out of Earth's Medieval period. In this strange, new world, the team is plagued by a mystery villain, and only one hero has the stuff to free his (or her) cohorts from their predicament. (Hint: The still-dead Doctor Druid is *not* the hero in question.) By Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. **$1.99**

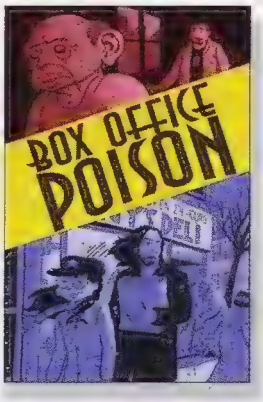
THE AWAKENING #3

IMAGE Mystery woman Rachel King is having a pretty bad decade. She's been shot in the head and left for dead on the mean streets of New York. Now fully recovered, things get real wonky as she enters her uncle David's subconscious, probes his mind and gives him a enigmatic ring. Odder still, Rachel learns her uncle's about to face the demonic man, and the ring she gave him may not be enough to stop the fiend. By Stephen Blue. **MR $2.95**

BOX OFFICE POISON #8

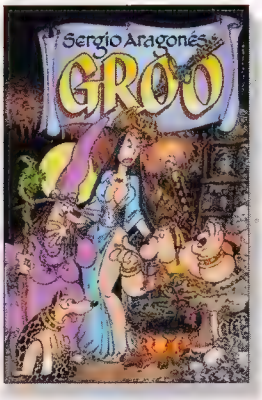
ANTARCTIC PRESS Joe Stalin. Benito Mussolini. Idi Amin—all of them pikers compared to the despot named Ms. Tweed. When the much-hated Tweed (an evil landlady if ever there was one) has a heart attack, anarchy reigns in her building. If ever there was a need for a ruler with an iron fist, it's right now. Plus, disgruntled

THE AWAKENING #3



BOX OFFICE POISON #8

THE FLASH #136



GROO #2

cartoonist Irving Flavor gets an offer he can't refuse from Zoom Comics. By Alex Robinson. **MR $2.95**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #4

MARVEL *Ooh la la! Fermez la bouche* and *cherchez la femme!* Batroc the Leaper's back and desperately trying to shed his loser image. To do so, he's going to have to put a U.S.D.A.-certified whupping on his arch-enemy Captain America. And while Cap battles the frantic Frenchman, various secrets will be revealed about the Supreme HYDRA, Sharon Carter and the Red Skull. By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Bob Wiacek. **$1.99**

CLERKS: THE COMIC BOOK #1

ONI PRESS Behind America's cash registers, serving as the last line of defense between madness and obsession, stand the clerks. This is the story of two such men, Randall and Dante (heroes of Kevin Smith's cult-classic film "Clerks"), and their quest to find ultimate wealth through Star Wars collectibles. And while Randall and Dante scheme for their millions, the misfit Jay and his cohort Silent Bob lurk about, dreaming of strange herbs and booze. By Kevin Smith and Jim Mahfood. **MR $2.95**

CONCRETE: STRANGE ARMOR #3 (OF 5)

DARK HORSE Give Concrete liberty or give him death. Tired of being experimented on by government scientists, Ron Lithgow (a.k.a. the cement-bodied Concrete) devises a clever plot to escape his bonds and alert the world of his plight. With help from researcher Maureen Vonnegut, Concrete's going to live free or die. Of course, the government has other plans... By Paul Chadwick. **$2.95**

FANTASTIC FOUR #4

MARVEL A good crop of danger is sprouting in the American Midwest. When the Fantastic Four and Silver Surfer rush to meet the threat, they find the thoroughly stomped Mole Man, as well as the villainous Terminus, who's stopped by for a light lunch (or to take over the joint). Plus, the Thing and sometime-squeeze Alicia Masters have their first post-"Heroes Reborn" meeting. By Scott Lobdell, Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert. **$2.99**

THE FLASH #136

DC COMICS "Human Race," Part 1 (of 3). On your mark...the Flash is summoned to a strange place by a wacky alien powerful enough to destroy worlds. Get set...Flash's gonna have to race the fastest creatures in the universe in a sprint through space and time. Go!!! And if Flash loses, the Earth goes bye-bye. Go, Flash! Go! By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #97

DC COMICS Grayven, the bastard son of would-be world conqueror (and all-around party pooper) Darkseid, is back. Y'know, Green Lantern almost bought the farm stopping Grayven on an alien world; what's he gonna do when Earth is Grayven's target? And will our hero discuss his on-again, off-again relationship with Donna Troy with an unexpected third party? The Magic 8-Ball says, "Reply Hazy, Try Again." By Ron Marz, Mike McKone and Terry Austin. Also, Green Lantern and Sentinel throw down against the corrupted Obsidian, who wants to turn his sister Jade to the dark side, in *Green Lantern & Sentinel: Heart of Darkness* #2 (of 3). By Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and Dan Davis. **$1.95 EACH**

GROO #2 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE When Groo crosses paths with his hated enemies, witches Arba and Dacarba, the gals wanna know what turned Groo from a dumber-than-damp-soil goon to a smarter-than-your-average-bear barbarian. Y'see, they figure if it was a spell, it can probably turn hag witches into supermodels. But there's a catch, and Arba and Dacarba might get more than leggy good looks and anorexic figures. By Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier. **$2.95**

HITMAN #25

DC COMICS "Who Dares Wins," Part 3 (of 5). Tommy and his bud Natt the Hat get themselves into a three-way shootout with

READ THIS BOOK!

JLA: YEAR ONE #4 (OF 12)

DC COMICS Y'know, out of the five original JLA members, three have yet to die in a major crossover. Go figure. Anyway, in days past, the world's greatest heroes came together to form the Justice League of America. As the private lives of the team members are revealed (yes, they actually have *some* time for themselves), the super-secret organization Locus conducts some super-frightening experiments that will spell T-R-O-U-B-L-E for the fledging JLA. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Barry Kitson. "Aquaman doesn't much trust surface dwellers," says Waid of the Leaguer with the most nonexistent social life. "He has found one friend that we introduced in the first issue, but every time he goes out in public, he finds a reason to be pissed-off about surface dwellers. This issue is no exception—he goes to Sea World." **$1.95**

scumbag mob-type Men's Room Louie and an elite Special Air Service hit-team. If Tommy survives the hail of bullets, he's gonna have to rescue his uncle, who's just a pawn in the whole ugly mess. By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.25**

IRON MAN #3

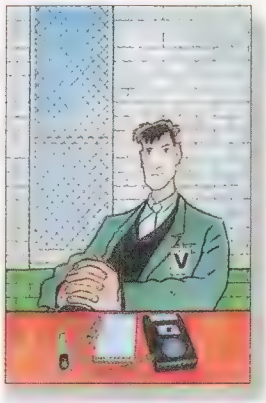
MARVEL All is not Swiss cheese, chocolate and fine watches for Tony Stark. Still stuck in Switzerland, Stark's hotel is destroyed by one of those HYDRA Dreadnoughts, and Stark himself is targeted for extermination with extreme prejudice by an arms buyer. Plus, Happy Hogan finds he's the object of some female affection. By Kurt Busiek, Sean Chen and Eric J. Cannon. **$1.99**

JLA #17

DC COMICS It's Miller Time, villain style! Prometheus has trashed the 14-member JLA and is draining the air from the team's Watchtower moonbase. If someone doesn't stop the fiend, the JLA's done like a Thanksgiving bird—as are Prometheus' civilian hostages. Now the question is, can even a shocking guest-star (Ambush Bug?) help the JLA save the day? By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. "It will still be the same seven members," Morrison says about the team's new roster. "We don't want people to think we're ditching the seven in favor of a bunch of new people. We kind of want the seven as basically generals and the army behind them composed of the other characters." **$1.95**

KANE #20

DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS Some poor felon is found stiff and cold in one of the 39th Precinct's cells, and internal affairs wants to know what happened. Lt. Wratz takes charge of the investigation, but what he finds is a web of lies thick enough to trap an entire police force. The funny thing is, not even Wratz may be completely honest. By Paul Grist. **$3.50**



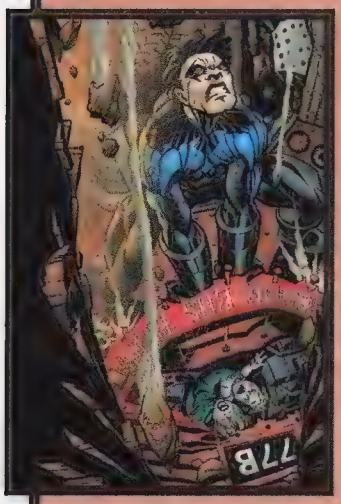
KANE #20

PREACHER #36

READ THIS BOOK!

NIGHTWING #19

DC COMICS Gotham City, after a tremendous earthquake (7.6 on the Richter scale), is looking flatter than an Iowa cornfield. While the Batman is buried beneath the Batcave, and Gothamites attempt to cash in their insurance policies, Nightwing races to his old stomping grounds to locate his friends and see what's what. Aw, ain't he sweet? Anyway, amid the rubble, Nightwing finds himself struggling to save a busload of people balancing between life and certain pancakedom on a ruined overpass stretching over a crevasse. The "Cataclysm" storyline continues in *Batman* #553. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. "It's Scott McDaniel drawing an earthquake—I've got to tell you this, the destruction is *incredible*," says Dixon. "He's super-duper at disaster scenes.



"Nightwing will be in Gotham for the quake issues; in the next two issues of *Nightwing* he'll be in Gotham, and then he returns to Blüdhaven because the quake wasn't that far away. So, there's some aftershock damage in Blüdhaven, and that's part of a storyline." **$1.95**

MAJOR BUMMER #9

DC COMICS Life is tough when you're broke and forced to eke out an existence by entering pie-eating contests for prize money. Super-slacker Lou Martin goes to the fair and wins first prize in danger. The overly muscled freak Nunzio hunts Martin down, and the rest is just one big bloody mess. As an added bonus, someone's going to be divested of his life this ish! By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. **$2.95**

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

HOMAGE/IMAGE Two great emancipators means twice the fun! An ersatz Abe Lincoln takes some young students on a magic carpet ride for a tour of American history as it never happened, spoiling the dreams of a boy named Byron Johnson. Later, when the bogus president takes over the U.S. government, the *real* honest Abe steps up to save the day. But isn't Abe dead some 132 years? The Magic 8-Ball says, "It is Decidedly So." By Scott McCloud, who created the entire comic on a Macintosh computer and says, "The phony Abraham Lincoln is a good modern politician. He knows how to use all the soundbites and the symbols. The real Abraham Lincoln, though, is this tall, lanky guy who has to go to the bathroom a lot and doesn't quite understand the way politics work these days." **$19.95**

POISON ELVES #32

SIRIUS Mess with an elf's old lady, and pain will become your intimate chum and death a pleasure cruise. When Lusipher the assassin finds his girlfriend is as dead as a Christmas tree in June, he blames his former friend Jace. (Who actually *is* kinda responsible…) Now Jace had better watch his elvish bottom, because Lusipher wants to slice it off. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

PREACHER #36

DC COMICS "War in the Sun," Part 3 (of 4). It's High Noon, and Monument Valley looks like a good place to die. The guns are loaded and the combatants' trigger fingers are sweaty. Preacher Jesse Custer and his corps are facing the evil forces of Starr and the nigh-

unstoppable Saint of Killers—basically, this means war! As Preacher takes his life into his hands, Starr plans to launch a cunning trap. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #13

ACCLAIM A freak accident gave them their powers, but stupidity and sheer ineptitude made them wacky—they're Quantum and Woody and they're still stuck in each other's bodies. Now, Quantum and Woody will finally be freed from the hell of living in someone else's shoes...and the duo will become a trio if Quantum has anything to say about it. By Christopher Priest, MD Bright and Greg Adams. Priest says, "It's a prelude to something we're doing called 'Magnum Force,' a four-issue story arc begining next issue that will pit them against an honest-to-goshness bonafide supervillain. And our two guys will have to start realizing the more serious consequences of the life they've chosen." **$2.50**

ROBIN #52

DC COMICS This holiday road is plagued by many a pothole. Robin, who's doing martial arts training in Europe, is going 10 rounds with the killer King Snake and Lady Shiva to save the life of his woman friend Dava. Then, Robin's gonna head home to...a giant earthquake in Gotham City. Now that's more bad luck than being Michael Jackson's son! By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. **$1.95**

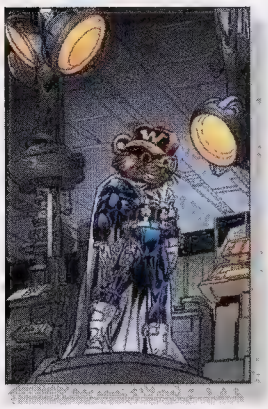
SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #61

VERTIGO/DC COMICS

"The City," Part 1 (of 4). In the first of four self-contained stories about the *SMT* cast and the city they inhabit, the Golden Age Sandman travels to the Bronx, investigating the mystery of why protection-racket enforcers are going the way of the white rhino. By Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

SAVAGE DRAGON #46

IMAGE Fist meets face in the feel-good punchout of the year. While the Savage Dragon storms the throne of the gods and rearranges the dental work of hordes of trolls and stuff, the She-Dragon demonstrates her maiming skills on a mass of enemies known as the Vicious Circle. Plus, there'll be plenty of secrets revealed, a world reborn and other super-secret stuff afoot! By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**



QUANTUM AND WOODY #13

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #61

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Hitman: Ten Thousand Bullets (DC Comics) ▼

Who hits the Hitman? Sean Michaels? Nope, try an assassin named Johnny Navarone. Hitman's got a price on his head and Navarone's the toughest foe our boy'll ever face. And if Tommy Monaghan (a.k.a. Hitman) survives the contract on his life, he just might tell ya the story of his younger days, when he was first exposed to guns, in this paperback reprinting *Hitman* #4-#8. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$9.95**

Preacher: Ancient History (Vertigo/DC Comics)

Explore the dark and disturbing world of the depraved (and deformed) villains who plague Jesse Custer, Preacher, in this paperback reprinting the Preacher Specials *Saint of Killers*, *The Story of You-Know-Who* and *The Good Old Boys*. The origins of the Saint of Killers and Arseface are revealed, while inbred hicks Jody and T.C. help a beautiful lawyer and a cop escape a bad-intentioned gangster. By Garth Ennis, Steve Pugh, Carlos Ezquerra and Richard Case. **MR $14.95**

Thunderbolts: Marvel's Most Wanted (Marvel)

Once a Thunderbolt, always a criminal. Learn what the 'Bolts did *before* they even thought to pose as heroes and fool the masses. This 176-page paperback reprints classic Marvel stories containing origins and appearances of Moonstone, Baron Zemo, Screaming Mimi, the Beetle, Fixer and Power Man. By Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, George Pérez, Roger Stern and tons of others. **$16.99**

THUNDERBOLTS #13

MARVEL Fire up Old Sparky (the electric chair, for all you nonfelons out there), because the Thunderbolts have got themselves a death sentence. Captured after their tussle with the Avengers and the Fantastic Four, the ex-Masters of Evil are sent to death row for their crimes. Sure, Moonstone's hatched a plan for escape, but she might end up dragging the whole rotten team down with her. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. **$1.99**

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #8

HELIX/DC COMICS While gonzo journalist Hunter Thompson is out shooting tin cans in the desert, rogue reporter Spider Jerusalem is working for a living. A woman from the 20th century is dragged out of cryogenic slumber and brought into the strange, future world of *Transmetropolitan*. Poor kid. By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and

UNCANNY X-MEN #354

WITCHCRAFT: LA TERREUR #1

Rodney Ramos. As for the future, Ellis says, "Spider's been doing pretty well, running around, pissing people off and having a good time. In #10-#12, it catches up with him—all at once. A whole bunch of disparate people who he's pissed off in one way or another all come and get him. And he's just finally got himself a nice apartment in a nice part of town, and then, all of a sudden, he's got to live on the street." **MR $2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #354

MARVEL If Rogue hasn't absorbed Wolverine's powers and memories, then who has? That's what the X-Men have to find out—and quickly. Rogue, who's been acting kind of funny since that "Trial of Gambit," is the chief suspect, but the true culprit is a certain killer man/pteradon named…ah, that would be telling. And in the depths of space, Bishop and Deathbird's ship gets shot up by a (much) bigger craft. By Steven T. Seagle, Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend. **$1.99**

WITCHCRAFT: LA TERREUR #1 (OF 3)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS In the days of the French Revolution (1789-1799), Isadore Hibbert makes a desperate gamble to free her lover, who's rotting in a prison cell. To save him, Hibbert enlists the help of the witch Catherine LaVoisin. But magic might not be enough, and even if it is, the witch's price just might be more than any one person can afford. By James Robinson, Michael Zulli and Vince Locke. **MR $2.50**

X-MEN #74

MARVEL Inside the Morlock tunnels, there's naught but death and pain. Now, Marrow and Archangel return to the sewers—Marrow to lick her wounds, Archangel to confront the fear he faced when he lost his wings. Waiting for them in the murk, however, is the wounded Morlock Callisto and the green, hulking brute called the Abomination. By Joe Kelly, Carlos Pacheco and Art Thibert. "Marrow's a heavily conflicted character," says Kelly. "She's done some bad stuff in her lifetime. I don't think she's necessarily proud of what she is, and part of her is interested in what the X-Men have to offer. But she's not anywhere near to admitting that to herself or anybody else." **$1.99**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #11

DC COMICS The monster Grundo'mu teaches the Young Heroes the fine art of senseless violence as he stomps his way through South America. And, as the beating commences, Thunderhead and Zip-Kid take some quality time out to discuss the nuances involved in superhero fashion wear, namely the cape. By Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne. **$1.95** W

Also shipping in February

Alpha Flight #9 (Marvel)
When Alpha Flight's ordered to recover Wolverine, it can mean only one thing: trouble with a capital "T." **$1.99**

Batman Books (DC Comics)
Batman buried beneath the Batcave? Believe it, buster! It happens in *Batman #553*. Meanwhile, in *Detective Comics#720*, Batman has to swim to safety *and* rescue Alfred following Gotham's devastating earthquake. **$1.95 each**

The Darkness #13 (Top Cow/Image)
The Darkness teams up with that dirtbag Wenders to prevent the death of Don Frankie Franchetti…by his daughter! **$2.50**

Divine Right #5 (WildStorm/Image)
Cybersurfing gets dangerous when Max, and Gen^{13}'s Fairchild and Lynch hack into I/O's computers. **$2.50**

Gen^{13} Books (WildStorm/Image)
At last, the ultimate connection between Team 7 and Gen^{13} is revealed! Follow the underground adventures of the first generation of Gen-Actives in *Gen^{12} #1*. In *Gen^{13} #26*, the gang heads to the Big Apple to set up shop and decide their future. **$2.50 each**

Spawn #71 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)
What's the connection between Spawn and vampires? Maybe nothing…or maybe more than Spawn would ever believe. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
There's a bounty on Spider-Man's head! Silver Sable, the Wild Pack and Hydro-Man strike at the wall-crawler in *Sensational Spider-Man #26*. Joe Robertson quits the *Daily Bugle* and Mr. Hyde breaks up his farewell party in *Amazing Spider-Man #433*, while Blastaar abducts a Brooklyn neighborhood in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man #90*. And say goodbye to Spider-Man (No kidding!) in *Spectacular Spider-Man #256*! **$1.99 each**

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
Crimson Guardsman Kir Kanos rescues a Rebel band in *Star Wars: Crimson Empire #3*, while *Star Wars: The Last Command #3* features the despot Admiral Thrawn's evil plan to defeat the Rebellion. Rogue Squadron pilots fight on the streets of Corellia in *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—Family Ties #2*, and in *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire—Evolution #1*, killer human-replica droid Guri goes hunting for her humanity. **$2.95 each**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
Superman Red battles the Millennium Giants, while Superman Blue fights a really big monster named Gargax in *Adventures of Superman #556*. *Action Comics #743* sees Blue teaming up with detective Slam Bradley, while Red fights with Intergang. The Millennium Giants redecorate Earth in *Superman: The Man of Steel #78*, and *Superman #134* sees the Teen Titans and Supermen join forces to fight static cling and those pesky Millennium Giants. **$1.95 each**

Witchblade #21 (Top Cow/Image)
Dirty secrets about her dad, boss and the freaky Witchblade she wears are sprung on an unsuspecting Sara Pezzini. **$2.50**

Wolverine #123 (Marvel)
When nasties Roughouse and Bloodscream show up, they ain't exactly there to invite Wolverine to the junior prom, if you know what we mean. **$1.99**

Youngblood #1 (Awesome)
Youngblood reforms with new members and maybe kicks a little butt in the process. **$2.50**

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TRAILER PARK

***Wizard*'s column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that**

'CAPTAIN AMERICA' SET FOR FALL DEBUT

By Rob Allstetter

Surprise! Marvel's seventh animated series of the 1990s, **"Captain America,"** is already being targeted by Fox to begin this fall.

But there's even a more stunning development. Saban Entertainment, the producer of "Cap" (along with "X-Men" and the upcoming "Silver Surfer"), is planning to set the series during World War II. Viewers will be transported to Captain America's original days, two decades before the Avengers thawed him out of that iceberg in *Avengers* #4.

"Captain America" producer Will Meugniot—whose recent credits include "X-Men," "ExoSquad" and "Street Fighter"—explained why a 1990s series is being set in the 1940s.

"All of us who were developing the show tended to agree that there were two periods when Captain America worked," Meugniot said. "He works as the World War II character, and he works when he's leading the Avengers. And, when you take him out of either of these contexts, he's really not as strong of a character."

Meugniot said the World War II choice was made because Saban is trying to make all of its Marvel shows distinctive.

"When you think of 'X-Men,' it's the first successful superhero team in animation in a long time," Meugniot said. "Now, 'Silver Surfer' has the outer-space environment, and 'Spider-Man' is sort of urban.

"We decided, in order to separate 'Cap' from the others, we would approach it more like it was Indiana Jones, a period adventure, big stakes, one man against the world."

Of course, Cap's World War II adventures frequently featured blazing guns and Nazis, neither of which lend themselves to a Saturday morning network series, especially in these politically correct times.

"We're beginning to just investigate the implications of doing World War II," Meugniot said. "As we are going through our first couple of scripts and going through Broadcast Standards and Practices [the network censors], we're trying to define how we'll deal with all these issues. It's premature to say exactly how things are going to be done, but I can guarantee you it will be done with the maximum amount of discretion."

Captain America and Bucky, Cap's World War II sidekick, both look like they came right out of the comics, except Bucky's a little older and has a more modern hairstyle.

"It will be a male Bucky," said Meugniot, adding, "We all had problems that Bucky was a 12-year-old guy who could deck people, so we made the decision that Bucky was going to be 17 years old, and that Cap was going to be 24 or 25. Bucky is going to be a bit younger than the military guys. Cap

Set during World War II, "Captain America" (shown at left) might or might not have Nazis.

will still be old enough that it doesn't feel odd when he's flying an airplane or driving a motorcycle."

The origin of Bucky is one of seven scripts currently being worked on. The first season of 13 episodes opens with a two-parter detailing the origins of Captain America and the series' primary villain, the Red Skull, and the parallels of their existence. The season will also end with a Red Skull two-parter.

Other villains in the first season will include the Destroyer and Baron Blood. Meugniot also plans to use Baron Zemo, especially with the renewed interest in his modern-day version in the *Thunderbolts* comic book.

English hero Union Jack will not be involved in the Baron Blood episode, but Meugniot said he wants to use Union Jack—as well as the Invaders—in future seasons of "Captain America."

"In order to separate 'Cap' from the others, we would approach it more like it was Indiana Jones, a period adventure, big stakes, one man against the world."

"The Invaders concept will probably be around the third season," Meugniot said. "In the first year, we want to establish that superheroes are unique, that Captain America is the one American super-soldier and Red Skull is the one German super-soldier. Then, as we roll along, we'll have more and more superheroes appearing."

The look of "Captain America" will reflect the era, with colors including khakis and browns. There's also talk of using historical, live-action cut-ins to help set up stories. Oddly enough for such a historically themed show, plans are to use the same computer-generated style of animation that is being incorporated in Saban's February-debuting **"Silver Surfer."**

"It's a little too early to discuss some of the things we're doing," Meugniot said. "Whenever possible, we are going to construct Cap's shield into a three-dimensional object. And we're going to use motion capture [taking the movements of a live person and incorporating them, via computers, into animation] for Cap's fighting moves."

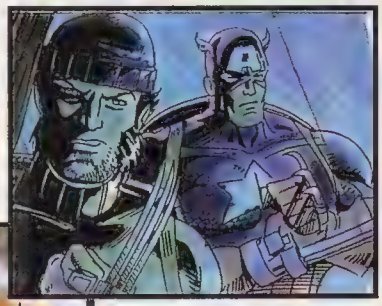
Because of the sensitivity toward Nick Fury with Fox's upcoming David Hasselhoff live-action film, Cap will not be teaming with the Howling Commandos. There will, however, be a team of commandos which will appear in occasional episodes.

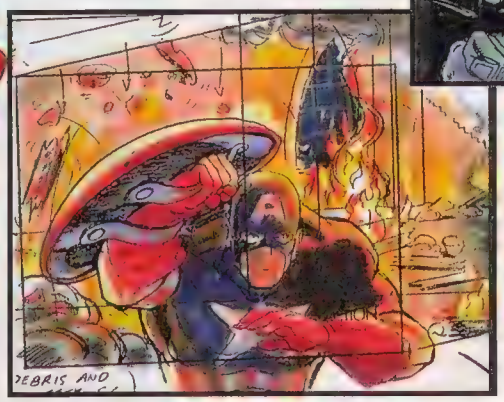
Originally 12 years old, Cap's partner Bucky will be 17.

The series' two story editors are Adam Armus and Kay Foster, who are best known for "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys" and "Xena: Warrior Princess."

"They have a very nice, refreshing take on the characters," Meugniot said. "It's faithful and it's reverent to the characters, but it still has a little bit of the hipness and humor of 'Xena' and 'Hercules.'

"When I say that, don't panic. None of us want this thing to be camp. We want it to be faithful to the characters. We also want the characters to talk like real people."





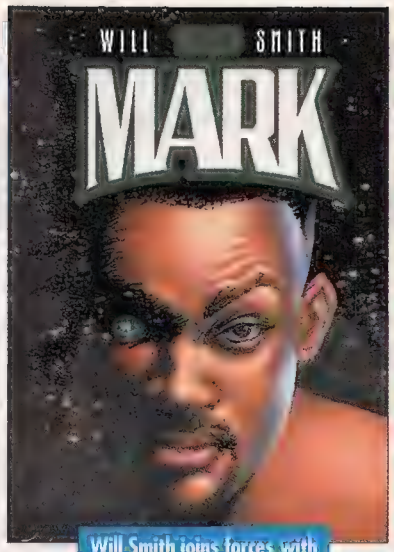
To give you an idea of what "Cap" will look like, here are storyboards from a WWII story from "X-Men."

Meugniot stressed the importance of getting Captain America ready for a fall start to catch the wave of the new television season—something "X-Men," "Spider-Man" and "Silver Surfer" failed to do. He added that work on the series is progressing toward his goal of "creating a moving comic book.

"We're all very excited," he said. "Cap was one of my favorite heroes when I was a kid. For my money, he's the last of the really great superheroes to be done. A lot of our staff feels the same way."

There's more good news for Marvel fans: Dana Booton, vice-president of Saban's animation, said "Avengers" will likely be the next Marvel/Saban series, and it's in development. While "Avengers" might begin as early as the fall of 1999, Booton said it's too early to discuss any details.

LIEFELD TO MAKE HIS MARK



Will Smith joins forces with Rob Liefeld for "The Mark."

Awesome Entertainment's **Rob Liefeld** has optioned several characters for movies, but it appears he's really hit **The Mark** this time.

Universal Pictures, in what Awesome is calling "a lucrative seven-figure deal," has acquired Liefeld's screenplay for "The Mark," which will be developed to star **Will Smith** of "Men in Black" and "Independence Day."

"I've been so involved with this for the last six months, it's sort of lost its uniqueness, but I'm really thrilled," said Liefeld, who turned in the final draft of the script in September.

According to Liefeld, Smith will make "The Mark" his next film following "Wild, Wild West." "The Mark" centers around a powerful, ancient talisman which Smith's character inadvertently possesses as he takes on a universal struggle set against the final hours of the millennium.

"The Mark" was originally optioned by Tom Cruise's company for Paramount Pictures in 1993, but when the option ran out, Liefeld decided to keep the rights and write the movie himself. "I felt that I knew this story better than anybody, and it was the best story I have told," he said.

Liefeld met Smith through actress and comics fan Jada Pinkett, Smith's fiancée, and Smith's manager, James Lassiter.

Liefeld, who is publishing a *Mark* comic (see above art) in 1998, first got together with Smith two days before "Men in Black" opened in July.

"He put his arm around me and said, 'This is going nowhere. I'm doing this,'" Liefeld said. "It made writing it much easier. I can't imagine it not being done with Will Smith now."

Smith, who has his own production company, and Liefeld shopped "The Mark" around to several studios in October.

As far as additional casting goes, Liefeld is hoping for Jennifer Lopez ("Selena") as the female lead and Sean Connery for the villain. "Will's talking to directors now, too," Liefeld said. "He's got a couple guys on his wish list, but it's premature to talk about it now."

Liefeld said he has another movie called "Krash!" that appears headed for 20th Century Fox, and that he wants to direct a smaller-budget movie featuring one of his comics characters for an independent studio.

The creator mentioned he is also considering rewriting the "Avengelyne" script for New Line Cinema, and reported **"Badrock,"** in development at New Line, could go before the cameras in 1998.

"We got the new draft of the script and it addressed all our concerns," Liefeld said of "Badrock." "We've made it funnier and edgier and pumped up the villains. It's kind of a 'Beavis and Butt-head' superhero movie. It's definitely a different type of movie. [*Laughs*] People will get some big laughs, and it will be entertaining for all ages."

Liefeld said that, despite some early concerns, it appears that Badrock will be completely computer-generated.

After playing the option game for several years, Liefeld said he has a better grasp of Hollywood.

"This could be a great time for the company," Liefeld said. "We designed Awesome Entertainment to be a multimedia company, and we're keeping our fingers crossed."

MUST-BE-TV

FIVE COMIC BOOKS TAILOR-MADE FOR TELEVISION

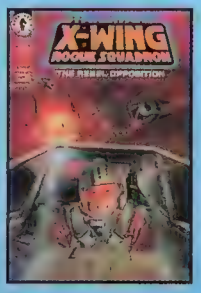
Anyone remember TV's "Spider-Man," "The Flash" or "Lois & Clark"? We do...and they stunk. If networks wanted to get serious about doing a quality live-action comic-to-TV show, here's *Wizard's* selection of five comic series that'd translate perfectly to the small screen.

Preacher (Vertigo/DC Comics)—Meet Rev. Jesse Custer, a man trying to find God...so he can kick His ass. Joined by his assassin girlfriend Tulip and Irish vampire Cassidy, the trio's learned that God has vacated Heaven, isn't doing His job and is now vacationing somewhere on Earth. Add in a maniacal religious cult who wants Jesse in its clutches or a Saint of Killers who wants Jesse dead, and *any* cable network would have an irreverent, ultra-violent winner on its hands.

Quantum and Woody (Acclaim Comics)—This is the "Lethal Weapon" of superhero comics—so already this buddy tandem has enough to go live-action. You've got a serious crimefighter and a serious slacker who must connect their mysterious energy wristbands every 24 hours, or else they'll fizzle into a ball of energy. The ridiculous situations they get into are a riot and offer a funny look at "superhero" life.

Resurrection Man (DC Comics)—Think "The Fugitive" meets "Quantum Leap." Mitch Shelley's a guy who dies and is resurrected with a clever new superpower at least once every issue (read: episode). Thing is, he doesn't even know what his powers are until he uses 'em! With moderate special effects needed, this comic series already reads like a TV show.

Strangers in Paradise (Abstract Studio)—If romance, comedy, intrigue, betrayal, prostitutes and lesbians can work on "Melrose Place," then they'll definitely work on a series based on a well-written comic book. What more could a cable-ready TV show want? Put 'em together and you get the misadventures of Francine Peters and Katina "Katchoo" Choovanski...two girls who want nothing to do with the messes they get into.



Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron (Dark Horse Comics)—Don't laugh. With the impressive special effects seen on "Babylon 5" coupled with the computer magic of Lucasfilm, a TV show like this would not only work—but rule sci-fi TV. If the super-guarded Lucasfilm ever wanted to expand to TV, this concept—with more human characters—would be the way to go. ■ *The Wizard Staff*

WONDER WOMAN SHOW IN WORKS

The third member of DC Comics' three most well-known characters, Wonder Woman, has joined Superman and Batman in live-action development.

Here's a rundown:

• **Wonder Woman**: Warner Bros. conducted a national casting call in December and January for the lead role in a "Wonder Woman" pilot movie, which could possibly lead to a television series on NBC. Select Warner Bros. Studio Stores across the country participated in the casting call, and production for the telefilm is expected to begin in February.

Details are sketchy, but this version of Wonder Woman will be the daughter of Hippolyta, who comes to America as Diana Prince, professor of Greek history at UCLA. Deborah Joy Levine, who created "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman," will be involved.

• **Superman:** The latest on the big-screen film "Superman Lives" is that **Tim Allen**, star of "Home Improvement," has expressed interest in playing Brainiac, opposite Nicolas Cage's Superman.

In addition to Brainiac, sources said the new script for the film will also include villains Lex Luthor, Silver Banshee and the Parasite. **Kevin Spacey** ("The Usual Suspects") has surfaced as a possible Luthor.

Everett Collection

Tim Allen as Brainiac? (What are they thinking?)

Gerardo Somoza/Outline

Kevin Spacey as Lex Luthor? (Awesome!)

• **Batman:** Joel Schumacher, who directed "Batman Forever" and "Batman & Robin," has indicated he wants to direct the fifth Bat-flick, but that might be as many as four movies away for him. "I'd like to do one more, but I think we need to wait," the busy Schumacher told *Variety*.

Word is the next film will be grittier and similar in tone to 1989's "Batman."

"I felt I disappointed a lot of older fans by being too conscious of the family aspect," Schumacher said of "Batman & Robin." "I'd gotten tens of thousands of letters from parents asking for a film their children could go to. Now, I owe the hard-core fans the Batman movie they would love me to give them."

George Clooney, whose box-office clout is being questioned after the so-so box office of "B&R," "One Fine Day" and "The Peacemaker," has said he wants to return as Batman.

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TRAILER TRACKS

© Comedy Central

South Park: Kicks ass

WINNER OF THE MONTH: **"South Park."** This animated series, created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, pulls in Comedy Central's largest ratings and has become to the cable network what "Beavis and Butt-head" was to MTV. Of course, "Beavis and Butt-head" never had an alien's 60-foot satellite dish come out of somebody's butt. Kick ass!

LOSER OF THE MONTH: Genre sequels. **"Alien Resurrection"** and **"Mortal Kombat Annihilation"** both were disappointments at the box office, following "Batman & Robin" as franchises apparently losing steam. The films had slightly above-average first-weekend openings ("Alien" was helped by Sigourney Weaver returning and joining Winona Ryder, while video-game fans flocked to "MK"), but their incomes fell off in their second weekends.

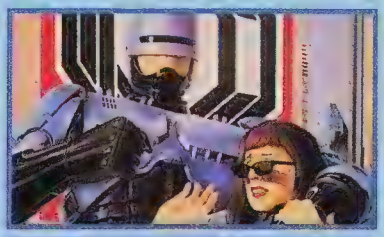
SEAGLE'S IN THE HOUSE: **Steven Seagle** is writing a live-action film based on his ***House of Secrets*** comic book from DC. The movie will be produced by Warner Bros. Seagle, who also writes the *Uncanny X-Men* comic, joins several comics writers now writing movies: Rob Liefeld on "The Mark," J.M DeMatteis on "Daredevil," Neil Gaiman on "Neverwhere," Brian Michael Bendis on "A.K.A. Goldfish" and James Robinson on "Freddy vs. Jason."

ROBO RETURNS: **RoboCop** must have great batteries. After three feature films and two television series, Robo is returning in an animated series next fall. MGM Animation is producing 40 half-hour episodes for weekday syndication, its biggest foray into the action-adventure field. Story editors for "RoboCop" will be Eric and Julia Lewald ("X-Men," "Gargoyles"). The series will be set in a future Detroit and has a mysterious, top-level government organization bringing RoboCop out of storage to combat crime.

Producer Robert Winthrop said RoboCop will get a slightly updated look. "He's like a walking Swiss Army knife," Winthrop said. "Instead of pulling a gun out of a holster, he'll have a variety of weapons at his disposal."

Susan Tenner. © Twentieth Century Fox.

Alien: Flattened franchise



RoboCop: Re-animated

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE: Phillip Morton has been brought in to work on the script for the **"Fantastic Four"** film. Doctor Doom will likely remain the villain....A draft of the **"Iron**

SPAWN BACK ON HBO

After blistering the home video sales charts with a collection of the first-season episodes, HBO's **"Spawn"** animated series returns for a second season of six new episodes to air this spring.

Supervising director Eric Radomski said the series will have a slightly different look, with a new animation studio in Japan, more detail to backgrounds and even more shadows.

The second season will open with a confrontation between Spawn and Chapel. Terry Fitzgerald is also featured, going on the run after finding some incriminating evidence against Jason Wynn.

"Story-wise, the second season is much more linear," Radomski said. "The second season still has the same sensibility where there are subplots that carry through, but they aren't so [relied upon] every episode. The episodes stand more on their own."

Work has begun on the third season of six episodes, which will include more of the *Spawn* comic book mythology. The shows could air as early as next fall.

TM & © Saban

"Surfer" attempts to perfect computer and cel animation.

SURFER RIDES COMPUTERIZED WAVE

The changing face of animation will get a silver coating on Feb. 7. That's the date Fox has scheduled for the premiere of **"Silver Surfer,"** the newest Marvel animated series from Saban Entertainment.

Saban is attempting to extensively blend computer-generated images with traditional cel animation on "Silver Surfer." The two have been combined before (i.e., "Spider-Man"), but the producers' goal is to make the mix less jarring.

For instance, Galactus will be a completely computerized character, while the Surfer will be presented through traditional cel animation. When they're both on the screen at the same time, though, the producers are striving for a seamless link between them, using software that makes the computer image have a cel look.

"As far as the technology we are using, it is a breakthrough for Saturday morning cartoons," said Saban's Dana Booton.

"Instead of being limited to pans right or left or trucking in, we can go around and through things," said Dale Hendrickson, the series' art director. "Another advantage is that there are a lot of effects that would ordinarily take a lot of man-hours, air-brushing and doing a lot of the traditional Disney-like effects. But with a 3-D environment, because it's digital, you have a lot easier access to those effects, and one person can do what it takes 20 people to do overseas."

The show's creators are also trying to emulate Jack Kirby's thin-thick, squiggly line style, evident in a short preview that shows the Surfer, some spaceships and Galactus' planet-devouring device, with its tendrils powering into a planet's surface.

"It's looking great," said Hendrickson. "It's one thing to have a concept, and I told everyone, 'This should work.' But when you go into these projects, there is no precedent. We can't call Hanna-Barbera and say, 'How'd you guys do that?' Because they never did it."

"We've created a whole new style," said executive producer Eric Rollman. "It's never been done before. People will be blown away." W

Detroit-based writer Rob Allstetter is trying his best to be cast as Wonder Woman's doctor.

Man" movie script has been completed by Jeff Vintar....It appears the final two episodes of the **"Spider-Man"** animated series will air on Fox in February....Despite strong ratings for the second season of **"The Incredible Hulk,"** it remains undetermined if UPN will bring the show back for a third season. A lot depends on the willingness of the network's new management to continue in the animation field.

SERIOUS WITCHBLADE: Production on the syndicated **"Witchblade"** television series should begin soon. "We want it to be treated like a real TV show, like 'NYPD Blue,'" said David Wohl, Top Cow's editor-in-chief and a producer of the series, "with the fantasy element as an afterthought."

SCOTT'S 'SIN': **Scott Lobdell** (*Uncanny X-Men*) recently sold a pilot for a one-hour live-action TV show, called "Original Sin," to NBC.

Witchblade: Keeping it real

Seagle: Telling his "Secret"

Lobdell said the show features "a strong female protagonist with superpowers.

"It's a story of Cynthia Holland," he continued, "a California housewife and mother, who wakes up one morning to discover she's the first synthetic construct to develop a soul. And as a result, the evil Digitel is out to recapture its property. Digitel is the company that made her." Lodbell said he'll write some episodes and serve as creator and consulting producer if the project makes it to TV, which may happen by this September.

PAINFUL PROGRAMMING: An "anime accident" occurred in Japan this past December, when TV Tokyo's popular cartoon "Pokemon" showed a character flashing his strobe-light-like eyes, and caused more than 600 young viewers to have epilepsy-like seizures of spasms and nausea. The victims—aged three to 20, and including some people who watched the scene on a news show—were quickly hospitalized, and the broadcaster immediately stopped the episode from being shown on 30 other stations. This event sparked a renewed interest in programming guidelines, along with causing parents to worry about the danger of their children's favorite programs. "Pokemon" features Japanese incarnations of "pocket monsters" and is based on a Nintendo game.

Everett Collection

Bullock: Where in the world is she?

ETC.: Fifty-two episodes of **"Batman: The Animated Series,"** which were originally shown on Fox, will begin airing on the Cartoon Network in February....Comic writer Grant Morrison (*JLA*) has been working on the BBC TV adaptation of his Vertigo title ***The Invisibles***. The show just began casting....According to *Variety*, James Cameron's next movie will be **"Planet of the Apes."**...**Sandra Bullock** has been attached to a live-action **"Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?"** movie. •

Jimmy "Big Love" Palmiotti & Amanda "Hot Pants" Conner Present:

The "Double Date With Us" Contest

CONTEST

Have you always wondered what the cutest couple in comics does when it's not drawing or inking your favorite titles? Well, we have, and since no one will go out with us magazine people, we're sending you to get the scoop. And in the romantic spirit of Valentine's Day, you're not gonna go alone. We're gonna fix up one lonely male and one lovely female and send you out for a fun-filled, love startin' night on the town with comic book artists Jimmy Palmiotti and Amanda Conner. (Just don't try hittin' on Amanda—you never know what Jimmy'll do.)

Photo supplied by Jimmy Palmiotti and Amanda Conner.

PRIZES

Grand Prize (2): One male winner and one female winner will go on an all-expense paid double date with artists Jimmy Palmiotti and Amanda Conner in the Big Apple! You'll feast on some fine grub, then take a romantic carriage ride around New York's Central Park. Plus, you'll receive a page of original art Jimmy and Amanda worked on together! Cupid'd be jealous!

First Prize (10): Ten almost-as-lucky lovelorn lads and lasses will receive two signed comics Jimmy and Amanda worked on together.

What You Do:

Write a personal classified ad for your favorite superhero from his (or her) perspective. Don't tell us *you're* looking to meet someone just like Psylocke or Gambit—we want to know what type of person *she* or *he* is looking for. You write it, and send it in. We'll choose the most original and creative as the winners and send them off on their double date. Sound easy enough? Break open those personal columns and get to it!

This contest is sponsored by Jimmy Palmiotti and Amanda Conner, our favorite little schmoopies.

Fill this out, attach your classified ad and put it in an envelope. Send to: The Double Date With Us Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is March 31, 1998

Legal of Love

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Jimmy Palmiotti, Amanda Conner, their immediate families and any of the employees of Openers Bar & Grill, you stink of beer and Cheesy Pools. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: the "Double Date With Us" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by March 31, 1998.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Heed these words: a bird in the hand is worth poop in your palm. Winners will be notified no later than May 6, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or if prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about April 15, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after April 15, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: The "Double Date With Us" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Double Date With Us Entry Form

DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

CHARACTER PROFILE:

Green Arrow

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

Real Name: Connor Hawke
Age: 19
Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 155 lbs.
Hair Color: Blond
Eye Color: Green
First Appearance: *Green Arrow* #0 (as Hawke); *Green Arrow* #91 (as Green Arrow II)
Title Currently Appearing in: *Green Arrow*
Major Enemies: Milo Armitage, Silver Monkey, The Key, Crackshot and Hatchet

ORIGIN

Raised by his single mother, who had a fling with Oliver Queen (a.k.a. the original Green Arrow) years before, young Connor Hawke grew up knowing that Green Arrow was his biological father. When he was old enough, Hawke moved to the Ashram, a California monastery that Queen had gone to years earlier, intent on learning the art of archery, like his father. Hawke grew into a young man at the Ashram, and was trained in the ways of the bow and other martial arts.

Facing a personal crisis, Queen returned to the Ashram. Not knowing that Hawke was his son, Queen took the boy under his wing and instructed Hawke in the art of archery, and the two became close friends.

When Queen left the Ashram, Hawke went with him, the secret of his parentage still unrevealed to the older man. Together, the two had several adventures, but when the villain Parallax (Queen's old friend Hal Jordan, who was originally Green Lantern) revealed Hawke's secret to Queen, he left his son behind, unwilling to accept the responsibilities of being both hero and father for his son.

Following Queen's apparent death at the hands of eco-terrorists, Hawke donned the mantle of Green Arrow, with hopes of becoming the hero that his father was—and then some.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Since leaving the Ashram, Green Arrow's eyes have been opened, leaving him somewhat awkward and innocent to the ways of the world. Acclimating him to American life is former FBI agent Eddie Fyers, a friend of Queen's, who sees himself as an uncle figure to Hawke.

Green Arrow has also reunited with his mother, a former flower child named Moonday, who views the world with even more innocence and naïvete than her son. This innocence is best shown in her marriage to Milo Armitage, an international arms dealer, who has become Green Arrow's nemesis. Unable to pin anything on Armitage, Green Arrow has nonetheless repeatedly asked his mother to leave him; however, she sees the conflict between the two as nothing more than stepfather/stepson tension that will pass. Recently, Armitage deemed Green Arrow as more than just an annoyance and tried to have him killed.

While Green Arrow spends most of his time fighting street criminals and terrorists, he has acquired one major costumed enemy, the Silver Monkey. The enmity between them began when the Monkey Cult infiltrated the Ashram, intent on making disciples of all of its residents. Unwilling to join, Green Arrow battled and defeated the Silver Monkey in front of the cult, disgracing both the Monkey and the entire cult, and proving himself to be one of the foremost martial artists in the world. To this day, the Silver Monkey seeks deadly revenge against Green Arrow.

Green Arrow has also taken his place among the younger heroes of the world, becoming friends with Robin, Flash and Green Lantern. His relationship with Kyle Rayner, the current Lantern, is a peculiar one—both heroes are aware of the legacy of friendship left by the previous Green Lantern and Green Arrow, and have worked to establish a friendship on their own terms, rather than become instant friends only because their predecessors were.

Perhaps the proudest moment in Green Arrow's life came when he was tapped for membership by the new JLA. During its most recent membership drive, the evil Key put the team out of commission, and only the rookie Green Arrow stood to stop the villain from reshaping reality to his own twisted vision. Moments before The Key would have achieved his goal, Green Arrow saved the day with his keen marksmanship, acing his spot on the JLA.

But he slowly began to feel that he needed more experience before he could see himself as an equal among his peers on the JLA. Realizing that the membership may have been too much, too soon, Green Arrow recently left the group, choosing to grow as an individual before returning to the world's mightiest superhero team.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Green Arrow goes up against Crackshot, the beautiful but deadly mercenary who's got the hots for him, in February's issue #131. As their, uh, intimate conversation was interrupted by armed soldiers last time, will they get the chance to finish it this time around so's Crackshot can put another notch in her lipstick case?

Look for a more offbeat tale in #132-#133. "Eddie gets superpowers for 12 hours thanks to alien drug pushers," *Green Arrow* writer Chuck Dixon explains. "The downside is, he'll die at the end of the time period. This is just too much for Connor to handle, so he calls in the JLA. Following that, GA takes on the Silver Monkey in #134-#135, in a battle that will cross into *Detective Comics*, *Robin* and *Nightwing* as well. It's going to once and for all show who the best martial artist is in the DC Universe, and people are going to be surprised at just how high up there Connor ranks."

And what about Green Arrow having to work with Batman? "It'll be his first time with Batman, and he's going to be pretty hard on Connor," Dixon says. "Batman isn't the easiest guy to work with if you're a veteran hero, and he's even worse with what he considers novice heroes. Basically, Connor still needs to prove himself to Batman, who thinks all his success thus far has been a fluke."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Looking to hit the mark on some good back issues of *Green Arrow*? Here are a few bullseyes:

- ***Green Arrow* #100-#101**—Oliver Queen's death and its repercussions. "This was THE turning point in Connor's life," Dixon says. "Connor starts his journey to be what his father wanted to be, plus he's introduced to the heroes of the DC Universe, who give him their blessing, so to speak."
- ***Green Arrow* #105/*Robin* #25**—Two separate stories, as the two heroes guest-star in each others' books. Think all teen heroes are the same? Think again. While Robin and Green Arrow may be close in age, their takes on the world are way different. "Those stories turned out to be pretty cool," Dixon says. "The interaction between the two really helped to show more of Connor than we'd seen so far."
- ***JLA* #8-#9**—Alone. Young. Inexperienced. Facing The Key, one of the JLA's oldest foes, who's already taken down the entire JLA. Sound like fun? Yeah, not to GA, either. A classic story of a young hero coming into his own and facing up to following in his father's footsteps. W

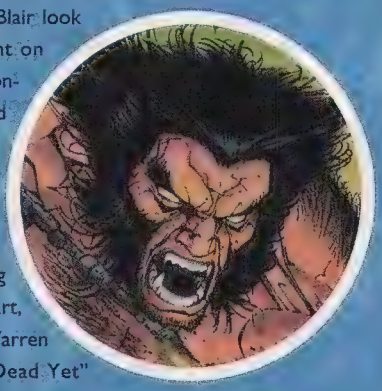
Intrepid North Carolina-based freelancer Matthew Brady's father is still his hero. Awww…

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WOLVERINE

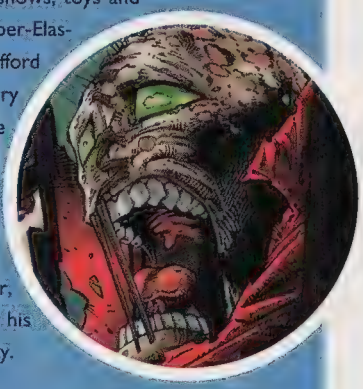
YAAAAA! It's the Wolverine from beyond! He's got that glazed-over-pupils Little-Orphan-Annie, possessed-like-Linda Blair look in his eyes! He's bent on destruction, has no concept of hair care and he's *still* 'bout the most-popular comic book guy to come down the pike since forever! Hey, fans dig Leinil Yu's *Wolverine* art, they super-dug the Warren Ellis-scripted "Not Dead Yet" Wolvie storyline and they've always gone for the outcast, loner, tough-ass persona that is our fuzzy pal Logan. Now if only Wolvie would buy a comb, maybe he'd get a date this Saturday and become popular with the ladies.



2) SPAWN

Nice teeth. Not a filling to be seen. The rumors are true: Spawn flosses regularly.

Ya ever sit on a really cold toilet seat? A really, *really* cold toilet seat? Looks like that's what happened to ol' Spawny-guy here. But you'd think with all the dough Spawn brings in from comics, movies, TV shows, toys and new upcoming Spawn® Super-Elastic Bubble Plastic, he could afford some sorta bourgeois luxury device that would keep the ol' porcelain throne heated to a consistent 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Or maybe, much like Wolverine doesn't care about his hair, Spawn doesn't care about his butt cheeks. It's a possibility.



3) WITCHBLADE

Speaking of butt cheeks, welcome to the Witchblade segment of our countdown. Boy, that Sara Pezzini's got one nice-lookin' caboo...NO! NOT GONNA DO IT! Last time we harped on female body parts in this column, we got slapped around by the Amalgamated Feminists of America or some such organization. Instead, we'll talk about the wonderful glowy-warm suntan Sara seems to be sportin' here. Wonder what she uses to get that look? Some sorta nice Coppertone cocoa butter concoction, perhaps? Whatever it is, it works. Sara, our generation's Witchblade-wearer, is a pretty girl in a pretty good comic, so yer average fan on the street digs her *mucho*.

4) DEADPOOL

Deadpool looks a little confused to be this high up on the list, so we'll explain the deal, in nice little words so that everyone can understand: Deadpool is fun. He's a goof. His trap is flappin' a mile a minute and he's got nothing but goofy things to say. He's got a killer supporting cast and speaking of "killer," Deadpool is one. He's a mercenary/hitman who goes 'round blowing people's heads off and somehow, makes you laugh at it. Now if only Marvel Comics could inject that kinda sense of humor into...oh, we dunno...maybe Spider-Man, we'd be gettin' somewhere.

5) THE DARKNESS

Speaking of butt cheeks, boy, that Jackie Estacado's got one nice-lookin' ass. Okay, we're done with providing equal time to both genders. On to description: Estacado, the guy who carries the Darkness force, is another hitman-type, although he's considerably less funny than Deadpool. What makes him so durned popular? Well, his power is connected to the Witchblade, so you get a nice crossover effect there. And, for the moment being at least, he's drawn by Marc Silvestri. That's a tough combo to beat.

6) BATMAN

Face it: Batman equals cool. In Bat-garb, the Dark Knight Detective is the tough-guy, cool-as-a-cucumber, kick-any-ass-I-want and-I-got-cool-gadgets-to-boot hero. And as Bruce Wayne, he's the suave-guy, cool-as-a-cucumber, I-could-bag-any-Hollywood-starlet-I-want and-I-got-a Ferrari-to-boot playboy. Not a bad life. Beats the hell out of, say, being a low-grade editor of a marginally successful comic book magazine.

7) HULK

"RRRRAAAGGGH! Hulk have Excedrin headache #82! Why not puny human just give Hulk aspirin?" Hey, we'd give Greenskin anything he wants and throw in a bag of chips just to make him double-happy. But if Hulk is strongest one there is (and he is), what could give this massive engine of gamma-powered destruction a headache? Surely not any of the nasty villains he faces. Surely not the beautiful pencils of Adam Kubert that grace his book. As usual, we'll just blame the French.

8) BARON ZEMO

Speaking of butt cheeks, boy, does Baron Zemo's face look like a big slice of ass pie. What *happened* to his face? Did it catch fire and someone had to beat it out with a size 16 football cleat? Ugly kisser aside, Zemo is quickly becoming Marvel's most successful villain. He hoodwinked everyone (for 9 1/2 issues, at least) into believing that he and the Masters of Evil—disguised as the Thunderbolts—were actually good guys. Just goes ta show: A pretty face ain't everything.

9) CAPTAIN AMERICA

On the flip side of Zemo, you've got his traditional arch-nemesis, Captain America. While Zemo is the poster boy for evil, dishonesty and yucky lima beans, Cap is the ultimate champion of goodness, truth, and yes—yummy apple pie. Cap's the man you can always count on to watch your back in a fight and as an added bonus—judging from this dramatic, Gil Kane-esque low-angle shot—he does a good job of trimming his nose hairs, too.

10) SAVAGE DRAGON

Don't get us wrong: We love Dragon and a hardcore group of dedicated followers love Dragon even more than we do. But we kinda feel sorry for the big green lug. After all, his girlfriend got shot right before his eyes, he routinely gets him arms pulled off his body and he got to talk to God once—God, fer cryin' out loud!—but couldn't get any answers to them great, ponderable God questions. Tough life. At least he's got a cool fin on his head!

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

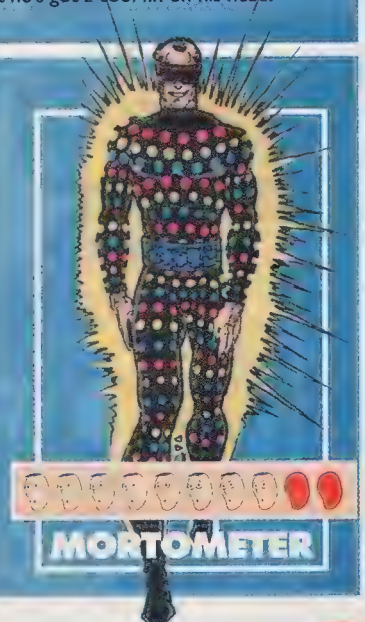
DR. SPECTRO

Hey! Looks like drunk Uncle Bob got tangled in the Christmas tree lights again!

No, it's worse. It's Dr. Spectro, a villain so freakin' dumb, he's tied to *Wizard* #57's Mort of the Month, Rainbow Raider.

Tom Emery was an assistant to the man who developed the lame-ass hallucination-inducing technology that powered the Rainbow Raider. A reporter accused Emery of being Dr. Spectro, a mythical villain who never existed. Emery figured, "What the hell? I'll give it a shot!" and used pirated Rainbow Raider technology (Mort-certified!) to whip up his own stupid suit just in time to get his ass handed to him by DC's Captain Atom.

Stupid.



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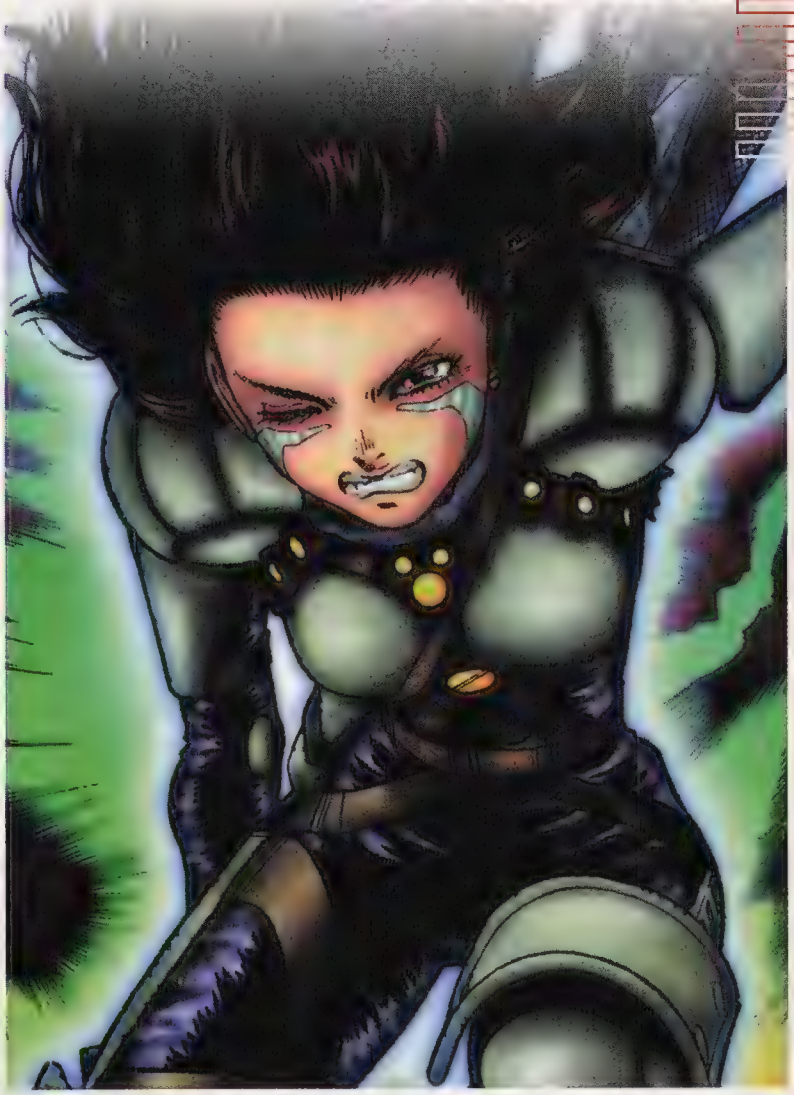
MANGA SCENE

By Carl Gustav Horn

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

TRASH-HEAP ANGEL

'Battle Angel Alita' is a cyborg's trek through a weird and violent future



This is no angel in the centerfold. She's Alita, a killing machine and heroine of *Battle Angel Alita*.

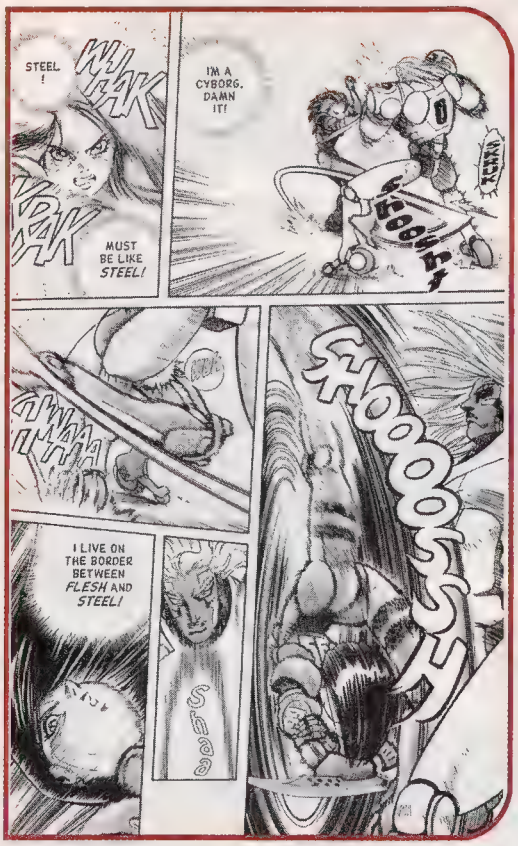
This angel has fallen. Hard. A beautiful young woman is wandering, trying to find the secrets of her past. She's lost her memory, but she's got mysterious abilities, and people are trying to kill her for unknown reasons. Suppose they chop off her arms, her legs, her head? She'll find a way to be put back together, because this beautiful young woman is not human. She's a cyborg...and such is the background for Yukito Kishiro's *Battle Angel Alita*.

Centuries in the future, the world is a wasteland. Two cities represent the remnants of civilization. One is Tiphares, a mysterious, glittering construct floating high above the ground. The other is The Scrapyard, a city bolted together from the bits of technology (read: junk) dropped from Tiphares. Here, the mixing of human flesh and machine parts is routine among the inhabitants, and cyborg-zation has become a handy tool in the savage struggle for survival under the shadow of Tiphares.

On one such heap of trash, master mechanic Doc Ido finds the head of a female cyborg. Bringing it to his lab, he gives it a body and dubs the amnesiac girl "Alita." But Ido soon discovers that Alita remembers one very dangerous thing: the *Panzer Kunst* or "Armored Arts" that make a cyborg into a killing machine. In love with Ido, who wants to keep her away from violence, Alita nevertheless feels drawn to understand both her new life and her past origins, and begins by using her skill to become a bounty hunter for the "Factories" that run things in the Scrapyard.

Alita portrays this weird future with gusto. As Alita battles the strange drug-and-cyber-enhanced criminals that prey on the inhabitants of the Scrapyard, she becomes a player in the high-speed combat race known as Motorball, and develops her human side. Alita doesn't want to be anyone's toy, but yet she still craves love. "In short, she's also a human being," says series editor Annette Roman. "As she becomes strong and noble, she also becomes a female role model."

A word of warning: *Alita* is as twistedly ultraviolent as *Preacher*, although the bizarre technological ways in which flesh gets mangled, combined with this black-humored future, also bring to mind "The Road Warrior" and "RoboCop." People don't just get their brains stuck to the wall; they get stuck to the wall *by* their brains. During one Motorball race, crazed fans stick their



Alita demonstrates the deadly *Panzer Kunst* on an unfortunate soul.

hands through the fence so their favorite racer can take their hands—literally—and then scream in agony and delight as their severed limbs become trophies for the champion Motorballer.

Kishiro reveals in Cadence Books' *Anime Interviews* that the original influences on the strange look of *Alita* sprung from his childhood, when his dad, who liked to build dune buggies, would take him to the junkyard and they'd look around together for spare parts to use. Not only that, but his favorite toy was a 12-inch G.I. Joe-type doll called "Cyborg One" that was made of clear plastic. You could not only see the figure's inside workings, but even pop off the arms and legs and replace them with various gadgets.

The *Alita* saga is about to come to an end, but the story of her strange world lives on. *Ashen Victor*, a spinoff mini-series set in *Alita*'s world, is scheduled to see print from Viz Comics in April. After *Victor* finishes its run, there's a distinct possibility that a brand-new *Alita* cycle filling in the gaps in the character's history (which Kishiro began in Japan last year) will be brought here as well.

Cyberpunk and fashion victim Carl Horn exists in the state of Euphoria. Or California.

Half-woman, half-machine, Alita nonetheless looks for love.

F.Y.I.

Battle Angel Alita will complete its story in February with the final issue: Part 8, No. 9. Except for Part 8, the rest of the *Alita* series has already been collected in eight graphic novels (a little confusingly, they only include the first seven parts of the story). In order from the beginning, they are: *Battle Angel Alita, Tears of an Angel, Killing Angel, Angel of Victory, Angel of Redemption, Angel of Death, Angel of Chaos* and *Fallen Angel*. All of the graphic novels are about 180 to 200 pages and cost $15.95, except for the first, which is 240 pages and $16.95.

ANIME PICK OF THE MONTH

Giant Robo

(Manga Entertainment, 45-90 mins. each, $24.95/$19.95 subtitled/dubbed)

Manga fan Joe Madureira, ex-*Uncanny X-Men* artist, has said that "Giant Robo" is the way superhero stories should be done. Set in an alternate "retro-future," the world of "Giant Robo" is one revolutionized by the invention of the perfect energy source—the Shizuma Drive. But accepting the power of the Drive was a devil's bargain, as its secrets could cast the entire planet into a final darkness!

Tied to the mystery are two opposing superpowered teams: the heroes, known as the "Experts of Justice," working for Interpol, and the villains, the "Magnificent Ten," working for Big Fire, a terrorist society whose goal is world domination. And, as the title suggests, there's looming, earth-shaking mecha aplenty in the fight, including the massive, riveted Giant Robo himself.

Writer/director Yasuhiro Imagawa made his reputation creating "Giant Robo," while the special effects are by "Neon Genesis Evangelion" director Hideaki Anno! Released so far in the U.S. as five volumes, the conclusion to "Giant Robo" has come out in Japan after a long wait. Look for the final installment, Volume 6, in America soon.

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH

Must-read manga books shipping in February

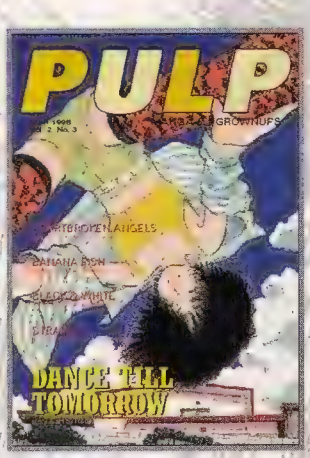
CUTIE HONEY #3

Studio Ironcat

Superheroines Cutie Honey and Kekko Kamen, two of the greatest creations of manga legend Go Nagai (who also brought you *Devilman* and started the giant robot craze of the '70s), clash in downtown Tokyo! Actress Rinko Terada is filming a comic book-based movie on location when she's attacked by the vile Panther Claw. The nunchaku-wielding masked crusader Kekko Kamen ("Everyone knows my body, but no one knows my face!") comes to the rescue, but trouble ensues because Cutie Honey doesn't know Rinko Terada really *is* Kekko Kamen! See the anime from A.D.V. Films. *Honey* is for mature readers.

PULP VOL. 2 #3

Viz Comics



This adults-only anthology compiles the steamiest manga around. In *Strain*, painter/assassin Mayo learns he shares a mysterious connection with a young girl he's hired to kill. In *Black and White*, two thugs are feeling a little depressed, so they go to pick pockets at a kickboxing match! In *Banana Fish*, two Japanese journalists looking for trouble in New York find it when they meet Ash; and in *Dance Till Tomorrow*, college student Suekichi, still reeling from his tryst with the mysterious woman who turned up in his bed, has to test his acting skills to the limit!

DRAKKUN: SHADOW OF THE WARLOCK #1 (of 6)

Dark Horse Comics

Johji Manabe's (*Caravan Kidd*) saga of that blond princess as edgy as her magic longsword continues in *Drakkun*'s latest story cycle, "Shadow of the Warlock." The warlock is the Romunilian Empire's General Kurgh, and that longsword in question belongs to him—too bad it's in Princess Karula's hands! And too bad for Radom that the Kurgh-Karula title bout's being held inside their city limits! Meanwhile, Karula's sister Rosalia is trying to enjoy a nice romantic getaway, but Romunilian stormtroopers may spoil the mood. For mature readers only.

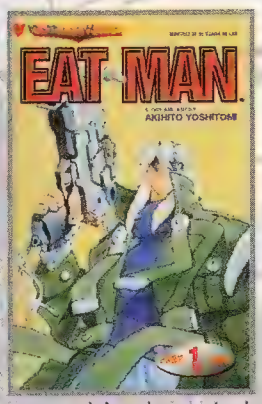
THE TWO FACES OF TOMORROW #7 (of 13)

Dark Horse Comics

Based on the novel by James P. Hogan, the hard-SF drama of man-vs.-computer passes half-time—and the score doesn't look good for our side! To test the reliability of "intelligent" computers safely, the "Spartacus" computer is tested onboard a space station for its reactions to being shut down. But when "Spartacus" learns to plug itself back in, all technical solutions have failed, and it's time to send in the Marines to blow it up. The only problem is, Spartacus has been manufacturing "Marines" of its own—and they're suicide bombers!

EAT-MAN PART TWO #1 (of 5)

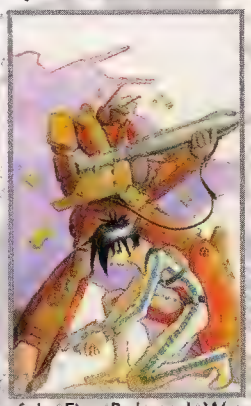
Viz Comics



How long has he been alive? Is he an experiment that got away? As Bolt Crank says about his adventures and powers, "Whether you believe it or not is up to you." This wandering mercenary on a planet where magic and technology mix is called "Eat-Man," after his bizarre superpower: Not only can he down anything—guns, radios, swords or a chaser of gasoline—but he can transform his arm into the exact object he's digested! In *Part Two*, Bolt takes on a job to avenge a master swordsmith whose swords have been swiped.

ROBOTECH: VERMILLION #4 (of 4)

Antarctic Press



Based on the legendary anime show of the 1980s, this issue tells the previously untold story of a day both shameful and glorious for the RDF (Robotech Defense Force). General Thomas Golic didn't shy away from treason when he and his cabal of top officers made a secret alliance with the Zentraedi warlord Khyron, and he certainly won't rule out murder in order to hide a plot to destroy the SDF-1! The conspiracy has moved deep into the heart of Khyron's own warship, as the hero of the First Robotech War, Rick Hunter, and genius engineer Lena have one chance to prevent disaster.

By Joyce M. Steel

Shi's the One

This month's line-up is like a 5-pound box of chocolates, a couple dozen roses and a gallon or two of perfume, all wrapped up in a big ol' heart-shaped box...you'll love it!

Bill Tucci's first and most popular creation, Shi, is up first in February, with a Mega-Chromium set from Krome Productions. It's a 30-carder of art by Tucci himself, along with Marc Sasso, J.G. Jones and Val Mayerik, all in an oversized (4" X 6") Chromium format. Of course, Shi will be the set's star, with supporting appearances by Tomoe and a buncha other Crusade Comics characters. Chasing the series will be four Mega-Chromium cards with an extra-fancy-schmancy finish (three cards per pack, suggested retail price $2.49).

BUILDING SNOWMEN

February's also the perfect month for making snowmen...even in California. California-based Bolt Entertainment teams up with Avatar Press to prove it with the first-ever 90-carder based on the really cool comic (no pun intended), *Snowman*. Creator Matt Martin, along with hotshots like Trent Kaniuga (*Creed*), have created all new art for the series, with subsets like "Snowman Throughout Time" and "Frozen Fear." Chasing the chilly set'll be five foil cards (one per every 11 packs or 1:11), three signed cards (1:32) and six nifty blue leather composite cards (1:64) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.65).

And if you're a serious Snowman fan, ask your retailer to order you up a "Signed Variant" box of *Snowman* cards. It's got the same cards on the inside with creator Martin's signature on the outside. Bolt has limited the production to 750 boxes, so don't dawdle!

SIRIUS STUFF

No matter what the month, every fan loves a good anthology, and this month Comic Images delivers with *The Sirius Gallery*, a 5-year recap of Sirius Entertainment's best work. New and classic art makes up the 72-carder, with stuff from Joseph Michael Linsner, Dark One, Roel, Mark Crilley, Kevin Taylor and Jill Thompson. Chase cards include six Chromium "Covers" cards (1:18), a three-card "Sketches" subset (1:18) and 500 randomly inserted autographed cards by a number of the artists (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

NEW EASTMAN

Before we jump into this one, keep in mind this is an *adults* only set. Brought to you from Kevin Eastman, publisher of *Heavy Metal* magazine and one of the guys who brought you the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, comes *F.A.A.K.2* in a 72-card "rough-cut" set from Comic Images.

F.A.A.K.2 is quite a babe. And, as is the case with most comic and sci-fi bad girls, she's bent on vengeance and out to mess some folks up. If that ain't enough to make you wanna pick this one up, the powerful art of Simon Bisley oughta do it. Chasing the set are six Photo Chromium cards (1:18) and 500 autographed cards (random insertion). Finally, to sledgehammer, be sure to bring your ID to the store with ya; these bad boys are for grown-ups only (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

LOST IS FOUND

Inkworks reports that their *Lost in Space* cards, a totally retro 81-carder based on the classic television show from the '60s, are currently available. For fans havin' a heckuva time findin' 'em, they've got a special toll-free number to call: 1-888-266-4226. There you can find out the retailer closest to you that carries them. And Inkworks'll make another series based on the "Lost in Space" flick from New Line Cinema when it's released in April.

Fleer/SkyBox, meanwhile, has no current plans to release any comic-related card sets this ENTIRE year! Their '98 schedule is light, with several "Babylon 5", "Star Trek" and "Deep Space Nine" sets on the agenda. However, the schedule's also tentative, so there's always the chance that a comic card set'll pop up somewhere. We'll keep you posted. W

Freelance barnacle scrubber Joyce "Pokey" Steel has often said, "If wishes were fishes, I'd have me a halibut."

"Now I must use all my powers of stealth to...where are my pants?"
Shi

"Hey...you put the ice cubes in and take the snowcones out. That's what this Snoopy Sno-Cone is all about."
Snowman

"Big muscles, vikings...yep, I'm ready."
Lost in Space

WIZARD® #80

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THOR
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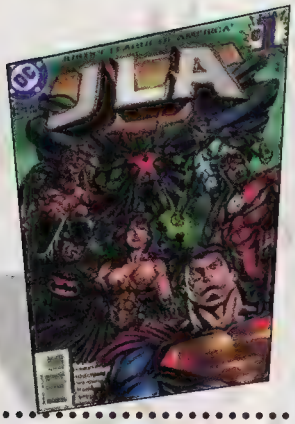
***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are the back issues burning up the charts in January.**

TOP 10 COMICS



1. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Einstein, Sir Isaac Newton, Don Knotts or *one* o' them great minds of history said, "What goes up, must come down." The comic book corollary to this axiom (yep—we're talkin' genius, so we're usin' big words) is seen this month with *JLA* #1. Last month, little brother *JLA* #2 was in the lead-off hole because of its relative scarcity. This month, buyers are a bit more traditional, and the more traditional #1 is in greater demand. So last month was only a test of the Emergency Comic Broadcast System. If it had been an actual emergency, you would have been instructed that DC was actually silly enough to turn Superman all blue and glowy. **LAST MONTH: 3**

2. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Things you can count on in life: death, taxes, various members of the Dallas Cowboys getting arrested, the fact that all underwear except those nice, comfy thongs will bunch up in your buttcrack, and yes—the fact that *Witchblade* #1 appears on this list. Witchy-Poo's debut issue has been on the list for (No lie!) 19 consecutive months! We're ready to retire the book and carve Sara Pezzini's mug on Mount Rushmore (but only if nifty-swell *Witchblade* artist Michael Turner does the sculpting) already! We're ready to plaster her face on the new dollar coin already! We're ready to sing her name from the mountaintops already! We're ready to move on to No. 3 already! **LAST MONTH: 2**

3. JLA #2

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Holy jumpin' Kryptonite! DC *did* turn Superman all blue and glowy! Then they split him in two and made him all blue and glowy *and* all red and glowy! And who knows what they're gonna put him through in 1998? Fortunately, *JLA* #2 comes from a simpler day, a day when the clouds were puffy, bunny rabbits were fluffy and Superman didn't look like a giant electric Smurf. That's a small part of the reason why it's on this list. A larger part is, well, the simple fact that people just dig durned near anything with a "JLA" logo on it these days. And that's sure to continue through this year. **LAST MONTH: 1**

NUMBER THREE

NUMBER FOUR

4. HEROES REBORN: THE RETURN #1

WRITER: Peter David
ARTISTS: Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert

Didja ever count how many guys are credited with "story concept/creation" in the megapopular *Heroes Reborn: The Return* #1? No? Well, we did. There's 19 of 'em. Now, if Marvel's standard royalty payment is in effect (probable) and if we remember eighth-grade algebra (doubtful), that means each guy got 84 cents for his troubles. So what's contributor (and *Deadpool* writer) Joe Kelly gonna buy with his share of the loot? "*Team America* #7, the last issue I need to fill in my run!" he says. Well, we guess there's no accounting for taste. **LAST MONTH: 5**

NUMBER FIVE

5. UNCANNY X-MEN #350

WRITER: Steven T. Seagle
ARTISTS: Joe Madureira, Andy Smith, Tim Townsend, Vince Russell and Dan Panosian

Well, gawl-lee! Lookee here, lookee here, lookee here! Magneto's back in town and he's nastier than ever! Which makes us collectively guess: Just who the hell is Joseph, anyway? For the last couple o' years or so, we thought Joseph *was* Magneto. But *Uncanny X-Men* #350 shows us that he's not! In true X-fashion, this issue has opened up a huge can of worms (Yuck. What a disgusting concept.) that's got everyone guessing. Guess that's why every flatscan worth his genes wants to scarf one o' these up (not to mention the huge Gambit revelation). **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

6. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

The Darkness is, well, dark. But it's published by "Top Cow Productions." If you combine "dark" and "cow," you get...chocolate milk! Now *that's* nice! No dark, ugly stuff there! Nope! Chocolate milk is both tasty and rich in calcium, which gives us strong bones and teeth. See? It's nice, happy stuff now! Except that those strong bones you develop will be broken by Darkness-bearer Jackie Estacado as part of his 9-to-5 duties as a mob hitman. Kinda neat how we came full circle in a mere 93 words, huh? **LAST MONTH: 4**

NUMBER SIX

7. KISS: THE PSYCHO CIRCUS #1

NUMBER SEVEN

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTISTS: Angel Medina and Kevin Conrad

Boy, here's a stretch: Take world-famous rockers KISS and put 'em in goofy costumes (like those they already wear), send 'em out on a traveling circus-like road show (like they already do) and make a comic. Hey! It's a hit! Gee, imagine our surprise. Image's *KISS: The Psycho Circus* is what we like to call "the unscrewable pooch." There's no way it *couldn't* have clicked. With millions of slobbering KISS-o-philes waiting to plunk down hard-earned cash for anything covered in black-and-white greasepaint, it was a smash waiting to happen. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

In addition to being tough-as-nails for a li'l 17-year-old girlie, we gotta give Ariel Chylde credit for one thing—great hair! Think about it: She spends half her time running through the woods evading her abusive father and assorted demons from hell, but her long, silky locks always maintain that shimmer and bounce. Trust us: Many a heavy-metal musician (like the KISS folks down there) could take a hair-care lesson from her. Wonder what kind of conditioner she uses? We also wonder when the next damn issue's coming out. **LAST MONTH: 7**

NUMBER EIGHT

NUMBER NINE

9. MAGE (VOL. 1) #1

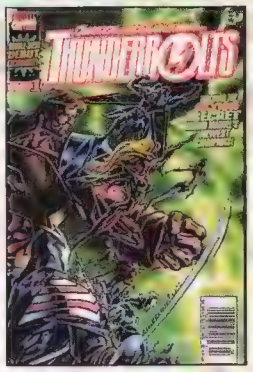
WRITER: Matt Wagner
ARTIST: Matt Wagner

Kevin Matchstick—the man on this cover to our left—has the coolest superhero-y gadget of all: A magic baseball bat charged with the power of King Arthur's sword, Excalibur! Think about it—he's got 33 inches of Tennessee ash crafted into a Louisville Slugger that he can use to knock teeth out of bad guys' skulls, lead the American League in homers—*and* it even glows in the dark! The new *Mage* series is going great guns, and Kevin's solo adventures started here in this 1984 Comico series. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

10. THUNDERBOLTS #1

WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTISTS: Mark Bagley and Vince Russell

Make no mistake: We think *Thunderbolts* is cooler than a mint julep in the shade. But that *name*! "Thunderbolts." It's so damn...cheeseball. It sounds like a lame-ass Mattel toy line from 1975. Can't you just hear whiny twerps with bad Gerald Ford-era haircuts saying, "Mommy! I want a Thunderbolt for Christmas!"? Sheesh. But maybe that cheeseball, unassuming name helped set us up for the big surprise: The Thunderbolts are the Masters of Evil in disguise! Hey, the concept worked, and if the name helped, more power to ya. **LAST MONTH: 17**



NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. **WITCHBLADE** #2 TOP COW/IMAGE
12. **SPAWN** #1 McFARLANE/IMAGE
13. **JLA** #3 DC
14. **ASCENSION** #1 TOP COW/IMAGE
15. **THE COVEN** #1 AWESOME
16. **X-MEN** (VOL. 2) #70 MARVEL
17. **BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN** #1 DC
18. **UNCLE SAM** #1 DC
19. **RESURRECTION MAN** #1 DC
20. **ASTRO CITY** (VOL. 2) #1 HOMAGE/IMAGE

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH • By Lars Pearson

MASSIVE HOMECOMING FOR 'THE RETURN'

They kept it nice 'n' simple—four issues, easy to follow, no massive crossover. And it worked.

Heroes Reborn: The Return brought Marvel's top characters back to "normal" continuity from the "Heroes Reborn Pocket Universe" in a tidy little four-issue miniseries that's been burning up the back-issue market, even though the numbers indicated it would do anything but.

Everyone expected *The Return* to be a hit, and retailers ordered it in corresponding massive quantities to match. But the series *still* exceeded sales expectations and is currently selling for well over its cover price. In fact, price increases started in record time: Issue #1 was selling in many stores for twice its $2.50 cover price by the time #2 hit a mere week later.

What does the future hold for *The Return*? Probable blue skies that run contrary to the worldwide rainstorms which occurred in the story itself. Linchpins of continuity like *The Return* usually do well in the long run anyway, and this series is helped by a general warm feeling that fans seem to have for it. Writer Peter David (*Incredible Hulk*) has been a fan-favorite for years and penciler Salvador Larroca (*Fantastic Four*) is a talented up-and-comer. The self-contained four-issue format poses little resistance to a fan's desire to buy the entire series. And, most importantly, the majority of fans see the continuity-cleaning "Return" as a good thing.

A small, gradual value increase in *The Return* is possible, and even probable if the four Marvel titles it relaunched—*The Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*—enjoy the continued success they've all been seeing. Month after month, more people will want to know what happened prior to these new series. And, if you haven't found out already, we'd bet even money you will too.

***Heroes Reborn: The Return* is a surprise scorcher.**

MARKET BITS

There are tons of happenings in the market that ain't exactly such big newsy thingees. Here's some quick-hittin' highlights:

• ***Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*** and ***Squee*** (Slave Labor Graphics)—With its goofy, slash-with-a-smile humor, *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* has developed an amazing cult following and defied the logic that a canceled series drops in popularity. The few issues of *Squee*—also by Jhonen Vasquez, the tortured mind behind *Johnny*—that are out are also mushrooming in price.

• ***KISS: The Psycho Circus*** (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)—Mass-media mania! Those wacky KISS fans are a breed that usually buy *anything* KISS. The fact that non-traditional comic buyers are buying this book, not to mention the same garish horror feel that helped make *Spawn* a success, fuel this baby.

• ***The Life Story of the Flash*** (DC)—Fans' hearts have been racing for this book since it was first mentioned in *Flash* stories six years ago. But retailers who didn't want to get stuck with a $19.95 hardcover ordered conservatively. Can ya guess what happened? Yep. It sold out immediately. This book defied gravity by becoming one of the few $20 comics in history to immediately show a price spike.

• ***Mage: The Hero Discovered*** (Comico)—Writer/artist Matt Wagner's *Mage* has quite the dedicated following. So when the new Image Comics *Mage* series hit stores and clicked, retailers went to back rooms and dragged out copies of the original 13-year-old Comico *Mage* series. They're going hot, and the back-issue boost seems to have lifted Wagner's current popularity, too.

• ***Quantum and Woody*** (Acclaim)—Positive fan word-of-mouth and glowing reviews from all corners have resulted in a *Quantum and Woody* sales boost. Some retailers are gambling and putting early Q&Ws out for triple cover price, but most realistic transactions are happening in the five-buck range on #1 and #2. Still, if more readers get on the bandwagon, those low-printed early issues could really pop.

• ***Uncanny X-Men*** and ***X-Men*** (Marvel)—New writers Steven Seagle (*Sandman Mystery Theatre*) and Joe Kelly (*Deadpool*) have injected new life into the X-Men and created a small sales-storm. But that could

The *Maniac*'s on a market rampage.

be bad for other X-books. Frugal readers may chuck an *X-Factor* or *X-Force* to keep up their core X-fix. The second-tier X-titles may suffer for this.

• ***Shi*** (Crusade)—Remember the "Bad Girl" craze that ended some time ago? Some heroines have other slants like fantasy/mysticism (Witchblade) or intense-espionage plot twists (Kabuki). And *Shi*? Some fans say it's the same old warrior stuff. Though new issues sell well, back issues are past their plateau and are falling in price.

• ***Warrior Nun Areala*** (Antarctic Press)—This nun-with-a-gun got a media bump courtesy of *USA Today*'s recent piece on the controversy surrounding her, but faded into near-obscurity soon thereafter. Worse, regular artist Ben Dunn has left the book, and *Areala* has yet to recover. W

Wizard Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson is also in danger of fading into obscurity. But once Matt Wagner starts drawing him, just you watch out!

Is Areala done and Dunn?

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

Bobbi Martin

1 **Grant Morrison**
JLA, The Invisibles

Paul Schiraldi

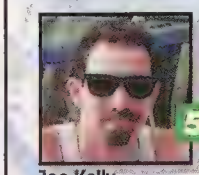
2 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Avengers

Paul Schiraldi

3 **Mark Waid**
Ka-Zar, Captain America

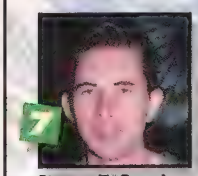
Paul Schiraldi

4 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman



5 **Joe Kelly**
Deadpool, X-Men

6 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher



7 **Steven T. Seagle**
Uncanny X-Men, Alpha Flight

J. Schuyler

8 **Scott Lobdell**
Fantastic Four

9 **Matt Wagner**
Mage: The Hero Defined

Albert Ortega

10 **Erik Larsen**
Savage Dragon

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

1 **Michael Turner**
Witchblade

Jim McHugh

2 **Marc Silvestri**
The Darkness

Paul Schiraldi

3 **Joe Madureira**
upcoming: *Battle Chasers*

Paul Schiraldi

4 **Alex Ross**
Uncle Sam

Paul Schiraldi

5 **Jim Lee**
Divine Right

Paul Schiraldi

6 **Adam Kubert**
Incredible Hulk

C. Blankenhorn

7 **Andy Kubert**
Ka-Zar

Al Ortega

8 **Carlos Pacheco**
X-Men

9 **Chris Bachalo**
Uncanny X-Men

10 **Leinil Yu**
Wolverine

***Pencilers and painters**
***Wizard*'s Top 10 Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

BURIED TREASURE

TERMINATOR: THE BURNING EARTH #1

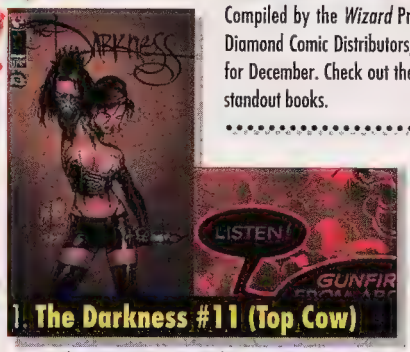
He's the champion of comic book painters! He's able to command a $4.95 cover price on his name alone! He's Alex Ross, and everyone's forgotten that his *first* comic work—prior to the acclaimed *Marvels*—is here in *Terminator: The Burning Earth* #1.

This series was published by the now-defunct Now Comics, a company that's, well, defunct. That should tell you all you need to know about it. And although "Terminator" was once a big deal in the comic world, the name is now as dead as the proverbial doornail. This sucker's going cheap, but since the sun will explode before Ross stops having hits (see *Kingdom Come*), you shouldn't let this one get by you. ■ *LP*

WIZARD™ TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of DECEMBER.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for December. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books.



1. The Darkness #11 (Top Cow)
2. The Avengers #1 (Marvel)
3. Iron Man #1 (Marvel)
4. Fantastic Four #2 (Marvel)
5. Uncanny X-Men #352 (Marvel)
6. X-Men #72 (Marvel)
7. Spawn #69 (McFarlane/Image)
8. Captain America #2 (Marvel)
9. Wolverine #121 (Marvel)
10. JLA #15 (DC)
11. Curse of the Spawn #16 (McFarlane/Image)
12. Generation X #35 (Marvel)
13. JLA: Year One #2 (DC)
14. JLA: Paradise Lost #2 (DC)
15. Wolverine: Days of Future Past #3 (Marvel)
16. Superman Red/Superman Blue (DC)
17. X-Man #35 (Marvel)
18. WildC.A.T.s/X-Men: The Dark Age (Marvel)
19. Generation X/Gen^{13} (Marvel)
20. X-Force #74 (Marvel)
21. X-Factor #142 (Marvel)
22. Cable #51 (Marvel)
23. Incredible Hulk #461 (Marvel)
24. Divine Right #4 (WildStorm/Image)
25. Tales of the Witchblade #4 (Top Cow/Image)
26. Amazing Spider-Man #431 (Marvel)
27. Gen^{13} #25 (WildStorm/Image)
28. Superman #132 (DC)
29. Adventures of Superman #555 (DC)
30. KISS: The Psycho Circus #6 (McFarlane/Image)
31. Uncle Sam #2 (Vertigo/DC)
32. The Creech #2 (Image)
33. X-Man '97 (Marvel)
34. Excalibur #117 (Marvel)
35. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #88 (Marvel)
36. Spectacular Spider-Man #254 (Marvel)
37. Superman: The Man of Steel #76 (DC)
38. New Year's Evil: Gog #1 (DC)
39. Batman #551 (DC)
40. Alpha Flight #7 (Marvel)
41. Sensational Spider-Man #24 (Marvel)
42. Deadpool #13 (Marvel)
43. Unlimited Access #3 (Marvel)
44. New Year's Evil: Prometheus #1 (DC)
45. Bishop: Xavier's Security Enforcer #2 (Marvel)
46. Legends of the DC Universe #1 (DC)
47. Detective Comics #718 (DC)
48. Green Lantern #95 (DC)
49. Thunderbolts #11 (Marvel)
50. Longshot (Marvel)
51. Star Wars: Crimson Empire #1 (Dark Horse)
52. Preacher #34 (Vertigo/DC)
53. Nightwing #17 (DC)
54. Batman/Predator III: Blood Ties #4 (DC)
55. Flash #134 (DC)
56. The Tenth #4 (Image)
57. Xena: Xena and the Dragon's Teeth #1 (Topps)
58. Spawn Movie Adaptation (WildStorm/Image)
59. Xena: Warrior Princess #2 (Topps)
60. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #103 (DC)
61. Voodoo #2 (WildStorm/Image)
62. Supergirl #18 (DC)
63. New Year's Evil: Scarecrow #1 (DC)
64. New Year's Evil: Darkseid #1 (DC)
65. Kitty Pryde: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. #3 (Marvel)
66. Pitt #16 (Full Bleed Studios)
67. Conspiracy #1 (Marvel)
68. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #71 (DC)
69. Gen^{13} Bootleg #14 (WildStorm/Image)
70. The X-Files #37 (Topps)
71. Wonder Woman #130 (DC)
72. New Year's Evil: Mr. Mxyzptlk #1 (DC)
73. Preacher Special: Cassidy—B. & W. (Vertigo/DC)
74. Robin #50 (DC)
75. WildCORE #2 (WildStorm/Image)
76. New Year's Evil: The Rogues #1 (DC)
77. Spider-Man Unlimited #19 (Marvel)
78. Catwoman #54 (DC)
79. Conspiracy #2 (Marvel)
80. Star Wars: The Last Command #2 (Dark Horse)
81. Birds of Prey: Batgirl #1 (DC)
82. Ka-Zar #10 (Marvel)
83. New Year's Evil: Dark Nemesis #1 (DC)
84. New Year's Evil: Body Doubles #1 (DC)
85. Gen^{13} Interactive #3 (WildStorm/Image)
86. Chase #1 (DC)
87. Maverick #6 (Marvel)
88. Gen^{13} #25 Voyager Pack (WildStorm/Image)
89. Werewolf by Night #1 (Marvel)
90. Shadows and Light #1 (Marvel)
91. Quicksilver #4 (Marvel)
92. Heroes for Hire #8 (Marvel)
93. Starman #39 (DC)
94. Neil Gaiman & C. Vess' Stardust #3 (Vertigo/DC)
95. Mage: The Hero Defined #6 (Image)
96. Elektra #15 (Marvel)
97. Supergirl/Prysm Double-Shot (DC)
98. Teen Titans #17 (DC)
99. Superman: Distant Fires (DC)
100. Arcanum #7 (Top Cow/Image)

'DARKNESS' MOOOVES FOR TOP COW

• ***The Darkness* #11** (No. 1)—What happens when you take a popular property (say, *The Darkness*) and slap 11 variant covers on it? You get *The Darkness* #11, far and away the top direct-market sales book of the entire year. *Darkness* #11 kicked ass, and only the aftermarket remains a question. The 13 variants on 1995's *Gen^{13}* #1 were a huge secondary market success, but that book launched a new monthly for a sizzling-hot team. *The Darkness* #11 variants hit after this series was already established. Will the hype spur interest or erode *The Darkness'* long-term following if readers feel that collecting this title ain't worth the effort? Time will tell…

• ***The Avengers* #1 & *Iron Man* #1** (Nos. 2-3)—The juggernaut that was *The Darkness* #11 pushed down what should have been a surefire one-two punch. Marvel's "Heroes Return" relaunch titles march on with huge interest behind them.

• ***Gen^{13}* #25** (No. 27)—*Gen^{13}* sales have been blah since penciler J. Scott Campbell departed *Gen^{13}* to start his creator-owned *Danger Girl*, so this anniversary issue that debuts the new creative team of writer John Arcudi (*Major Bummer*) and penciler Gary Frank (*Supergirl*) is a WildStorm windfall.

• ***Excalibur* #117** (No. 34)—*Excalibur* is notable for the "stretch factor." X-title sales used to group very closely together. The fact that *Excalibur* keeps falling away from the flagship *Uncanny X-Men* is proof readers are no longer undying in their X-allegiance, and may point to the rumored *Excalibur* cancellation.

• ***New Year's Evil* #1s** (Nos. 38, 44, 63-64, 72, 76, 83-84)—Sinfully good placings for these DC villain one-shots, but notice the pattern. Anticipated story value was key, *not* name recognition. *Gog* has ties to the eternally-promised-but-never-here *Kingdom* series and Prometheus is gonna make life miserable for the JLA, so their books beat out well-known veteran characters like Scarecrow and Darkseid.

• ***Chase* #1** (No. 86)—A bold showing for DC's newest monthly, considering investigator Cameron Chase has no history (November 1997's *Batman* #550 was her first appearance) and the title's concept of Chase "chasing" paranormals is a bit murky. *Chase* might never return to the Top 100 again, but could be another DC sleeper hit, a la *Resurrection Man*.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special incentives), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: **WizardTGTC@aol.com**

survey: issue 79

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & CONCERNS

We want to know what you like about this li'l mag of ours. Tell us what you thought about this particular issue of *WIZARD*, what you liked best, and what sucked sour frog-ass. (Use extra paper if you're one of them long-winded types.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRICE CHANGES

Are books selling in your area for a lot more or a lot less than *WIZARD* is listing them at?
If they are, we wanna know. List any major discrepancies you feel exist in the *WIZARD* price guide.
(Use extra paper if necessary.)

Title	Issue #	What it sells for in your area

TOP TEN HOTTEST COMICS

What do you see as the hottest comics among the circle of friends you hang out with? List them below, with the hottest book at the number one slot.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Who is your favorite comic book artist? Actually, we wanna know who your top 10 favorite artists are. List your favorite artist in the number one slot, followed by your second favorite artist, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Hang in there; we're almost done. What we need now is the list of your 10 favorite comic book writers.
You know the drill: your favorite in pole position, with your second favorite at number two, yadda, yadda, yadda.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

let your voice be heard

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We need your help. Y'see, the only way to keep improving the WIZARD price guide is to keep in touch with the thousands of comic book fans that make this industry what it is. So, we need you to take a couple of minutes and fill out the survey on the left and mail this page to us. And heck, by helping us make a better mag, you'll *get* a better mag! (See? It all works out in the end.) Oh, and feel free to photocopy this page if you don't feel like destroying this issue.

WHO ARE YOU?

_____
Name (please print)

_____
Address

_____
City State

_____
Zip Age

_____
e-mail address (if you got one)

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Creator of

YOUNGBLOOD

X-FORCE

and

DEADPOOL

Photo: Paul Schiraldi

Rob Liefeld and Jeph Loeb will

World Premiere RE:GEX

at Wizard World!

More special guests to be

For more information on Wizard World Chicago, and visit Wizard World on America

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1998 GUEST OF HONOR

TODD McFARLANE
Creator of
SPAWN

Photo: Jim McHugh

MORE SPECIAL GUESTS

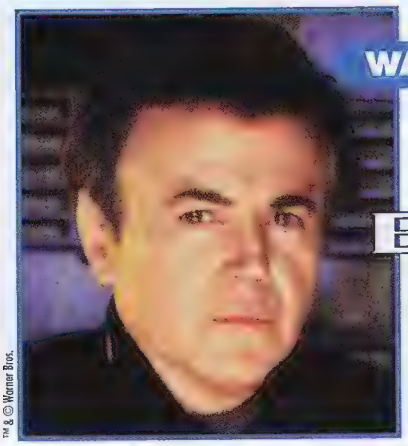
Photo: Al Ortega

MARC SILVESTRI

TOP COW PRODUCTIONS, INC.

MICHAEL TURNER

Photo: Paul Schiraldi


TM & © Warner Bros.

WALTER KOENIG

BABYLON 5

CLAUDIA CHRISTIAN

TM & © Warner Bros.

announced next month!

read *Wizard: The Comics Magazine* Online. Keyword: Wizard.

ENTERTAINMENT WIZARD GROUP

Spawn logotype TM & © Todd McFarlane Productions. Top Cow logotype TM & © Top Cow Productions Inc. "Babylon 5" logotype TM & © TNN.

BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Space Cabbie welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section!

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

This month, we correlate your knowledge of the absurd with subplots that were edited out of DC's big event of 1997, *Genesis* (What the hell what that about, anyhow?). The higher your score, the more you'll wish that they just edited out the whole lame mini-series—that is, if you don't wish that already.

Score	Rank
0-4	Green Lantern splits into two separate entities, Green Lantern Green and Green Lantern Chartreuse.
5-14	Warrior gets hot and heavy with a Boom Tube and, well…Boom.
15-19	The hilarious return of Darkseid's wacky Don Knottsesque brother, Bing-Bing.
20	The JLA franchise gets watered down and lame when a bunch of second-tier losers are allowed to join…oh, wait, that happened *after* the *Genesis* series. Sorry.

1. What's tough guy Flash Thompson's real first name?
A) Eugene
B) Middleton
C) Orin
D) Sheldon

2. What's the nickname of the slum area that's the dwelling place of Spawn?
A) Dirt Town
B) Filthville
C) Little Hell
D) Rat City

3. Shi's 17th-century predecessor was Tora No Shi. Just what the monkey does Tora No Shi mean in Japanese?
A) Tiger of Death
B) Harbinger of Death
C) Messenger of Death
D) Death by Fish

4. When the Avengers went missing after the "Onslaught" epic, what did those goofy superheroes collectively known as the Great Lakes Avengers change their team name to?
A) The Gloom Patrol
B) The Legion of Losers
C) The Lightning Bolts
D) Alpha Fighters

5. At last count, how many deaths has Evil Ernie been responsible for?
A) 500,000
B) two billion
C) 10 million
D) 95 million

6. Which Tangent Comics superhero is *not* a female?
A) Green Lantern
B) The Joker
C) Spectre
D) The Flash

7. What's the best-selling caffeine-loaded cola in the DC Universe?
A) Buzz Cola
B) Soder Cola
C) Zap Cola
D) New Coke (but only on Bizarro World)

8. What do Hellboy, the Unknown Soldier and the Human Torch I have in common?
A) All are artificial lifeforms.
B) All fought the Nazis during WWII.
C) All supposedly killed Adolf Hitler in their respective universes.
D) All have tried, but never got more than four correct answers in any "CBIQ."

9. This X-foe masqueraded as Erik the Red during the trial of Gambit:
A) Magneto.
B) Mr. Sinister.
C) Apocalypse.
D) Plantman.

10. Who did Wonder Woman's fellow hero of Gateway City, Champion, turn out to be?
A) Heracles
B) Apollo
C) Ultraa
D) Wonder Man

11. In a possible alternate future, Jack-in-the-Box's son will become a character called:
A) The Jackson.
B) The Hanged Man.
C) Samaritan.
D) Michael Jackson.

12. In *Nightwing*, Blüdhaven mob boss Eddie Deever goes by what colorful nickname?
A) "The Shiv"
B) Fat Tony Goombatz
C) Pork Fried Rice
D) Lunchmeat

13. Where did Marvel's Black Knight get the armor and weapons he currently uses?
A) They originally belonged to his uncle, the evil Black Knight.
B) They were created and given to him by Iron Man when Stark returned from the "Heroes Reborn" pocket universe.
C) The sorcerer Merlin created them using magic and gave them to him.
D) The Lady of the Lake gave them to him to fight evil.

14. What was the Joker's moniker before he became the evil Clown Prince of Crime?
A) The Reaper
B) The Red Hood
C) Napier the Rapier
D) Tim

15. Which X-Men bad guy was a hero in the "Age of Apocalypse" storyline?
A) Exodus
B) Mr. Sinister
C) Deadpool
D) Sebastian Shaw

16. In the Psycho Circus, which smelly carny can become Gene Simmons' demonic alter ego?
A) the short, ugly clown
B) the lion tamer
C) the ringmaster
D) the Tilt-a-Whirl operator

17. Which evil schmuck was responsible for creating the Legacy Virus?
A) Bastion
B) Stryfe
C) Apocalypse
D) Jerry Lewis, in collusion with the French government (He's "nutty" like a fox!)

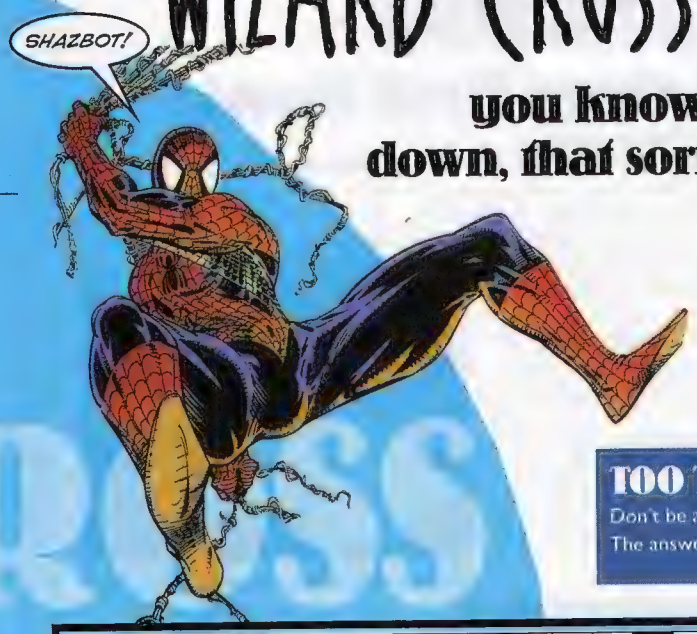
18. What did Captain Mar-Vell use to kill the alien Brood growing inside his body?
A) his nega-bands
B) the Omni-Wave Projector
C) the Cosmic Cube
D) alcohol and a rusty catheter

19. When the Micronauts first came to Earth, just how did they get here?
A) Their ship flew through a Pym Particle radiation belt, causing them to enlarge to the size of Earth humans.
B) They used the Negative Zone, which is a gateway between the Microverse and the Marvel Universe.
C) The Prometheus Pit allowed them to make the jump to the Marvel Universe.
D) They asked a New York cabbie to drive them to the DC Universe, and of course, they wound up in the Marvel Universe.

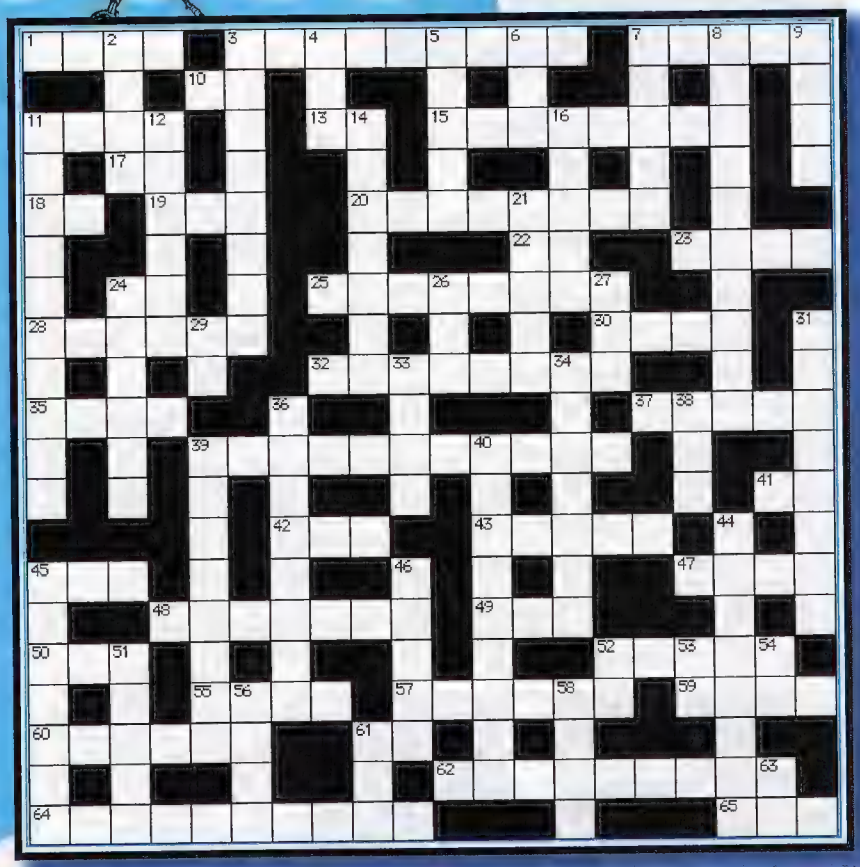
20. Just how did mutant freak Storm develop claustrophobia?
A) Storm was buried alive for three days with her dead parents, as the result of a terrorist attack.
B) As a child, she was kidnapped by master thief Achmed el-Gibor and locked in a trunk until she would agree to work for him.
C) Freakish mutant telepath Amahl Farouk put poor young Ororo in a coma-like state, which seemed like being buried alive to her.
D) She once got lost for a week in one of the Blob's tummy folds, but was able to signal for help by gathering all the lint she could find and starting a fire.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff



TOO TOUGH?
Don't be a horse's ass.
The answers are on page 198.



1. Luthor's new daughter
3. High Evolutionary's base
7. Justice League monitor woman
10. size-shifting Legionnaire; nickname
11. Rom foes; ____ Wraiths
13. *Teen Titans* writer; initials
15. Rogue's power source
17. Frank Frazetta statue; init.
18. *Superman* ___ *Muhammad Ali*
19. new Sandman's mom's team; Infinity ___
20. Metropolis research company
22. he's from Poppup; init.
23. Tangent Universe's Superman
24. *Marshal Law* artist; init.
25. Malibu's TV hero
28. Foggy Nelson's partner
30. Brother Eye's creation
32. leader of Super-Apes
35. Brandon Lee's last role
37. Harbingers' leader
39. Oliver Queen's pretty bird
41. Flaming Carrot's saying
42. Sandman's nickname
43. malicious *Preacher* organization
45. Lockjaw looks like this
47. TV's ally of Hercules
48. Rainmaker and Burnout's daughter
49. Winslow Schott's favorite thing
50. young, new X-Man
52. TV's answer to Vampirella
55. made Ka-Zar cool
57. DC's computer whiz
59. the dreaded comics ____
60. Long and Short Round's unit
61. Image and Spidey artist; init.
62. Tangent's superteam
64. *Watchmen*'s clever criminal
65. Hulk's pal ___ Samson

2. pre-Colan Daredevil artist
3. Zealot's new team
4. Betty Brant's dead husband
5. Hulk's radiation
6. Starshine's spaceknight lover
7. artists Taylor and Gibbons
8. creator of Crusade's warrior
9. Jedi master
11. Chance Falconer's town
12. Shooter, Harras or Berger
14. League or Society
16. *Battlestar Galactica* commander
21. Illyana's second home
24. new Awesome title
26. Zoo Crew member was this
27. Marvel book ___ *Brand Echh*
29. Hellcat; init.
31. innocent New God
33. Grayson or Tracy
34. Super-Cat
36. Mongul's base
38. *Avengers* and Flash HC inker, ___ Palmer
39. Querl Dox
40. Lady Death's sword
44. in Spidey's shooters
45. three-eyed purple JLA foe
46. Von Strucker, Blood or Zemo
51. Iron Fist's gal pal
52. gave us The Tick; init.
53. played the Riddler; init.
54. up-and-coming Wolverine artist
56. Asgardian forest
58. Squadron Supreme member; Lady ____
61. Shi model
63. armored Acclaim guy

BULL PEN

Better than Bud Bowl!

After 10 weeks, our wrists were killing us.

It was the first-ever Wizard foosball tournament, and a spectacular display of too much time on our hands. Two divisions (the Justice League and the Injustice League). 12 two-man teams. And at stake: a trophy roughly the size of *Wizard* Editor Brian Cunningham. After a grueling 10-week season, the two remaining teams were: Justice League champs the One Leg Wonders (Wizard Entertainment Design Manager Steve Blackwell and *InQuest* Editor Mike Searle), boasting an impressive win/loss record of 20-1. The other team? The only team to ever beat the Wonders: Kickers, Inc. (*InQuest* Editors Tom Slizewski and Jeff Hannes), with a jaw-dropping 21-0 season record. So who took home the gold in the best-of-seven Foosbowl? With a 4-0 sweep...the One Leg Wonders!

"We're really enjoying all the fame and endorsements," enthused Searle. "Thanks to all our supporters." Hannes claimed, "The best team won—we beat ourselves."

Blackwell (left) and Searle—champs, not chumps.

One of the Damned

Marc Wilkofsky

copy editor, Wizard: The Comics Magazine

What do you do at Wizard Entertainment?
I proofread *Wizard*'s features, columns and departments, making sure every sentence is clear, correct and cool for the readers. I'm also in charge of several sections, including "Trailer Park" and "Bullpen."

What are your favorite sections in *Wizard*?
"Market Watch," because it offers monetary information in an enjoyable way—and I used to write it. And "Casting Call," because I love helping my colleagues choose the actors.

What surprised you the most about the Wizard offices?
That the folks who work here—several of them college graduates—can switch from being seriously professional to seriously nuts in seconds. We can be sitting in an executive meeting, then suddenly running to the bathroom because someone fed us homemade brownies filled with Ex-Lax.

How's your life changed since appearing as a "sensitive guy" on the now-defunct talk show "Tempest!"?
I've been recognized literally 50 times—I've counted. The highlight was in Atlanta's Planet Hollywood, where four women posed for a photo with me. They were very desperate for celebrities. The guys with them were pretty surprised, too.

What's your favorite Wizard moment?
Performing the national anthem for the Wizard Foosball All-Star Game—I finally sang well in front of many Wizardites!

Favorite TV shows?
"Guiding Light," "ER," "Early Edition" and "The Practice." Sadly, the recent 60th (!) anniversary of "GL" was as poorly celebrated as Superman's looks to be.

Have you ever been arrested?
Almost. I was a 24-hour suspect in the shooting of a woman. The police thought it might be me because the perpetrator was a writer and looked like me, while my co-workers were suspicious because the guy kindly took her to the hospital. Two "X-Files"-type detectives showed up at Wizard the day after to decide that it wasn't me. It was absolutely scary.

Who are your favorite musicians?
Mary Chapin Carpenter is the most gifted singer-songwriter today. I'm split between Chris Isaak and R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe for my favorite male singer.

Favorite comics right now?
Green Lantern (starring today's most likable character), *JLA* and *Wonder Woman*, I can't pass up each month. *Transmetropolitan*, *StormWatch* and *Legion of Super-Heroes*, I can't put down.

Favorite comic book story of all time?
Crisis on Infinite Earths #7. Supergirl's demise was absolutely the most powerful superhero death scene in comics. If only she had been treated as well before that.

What superpower would you want, and why?
A safe, odorless teleporting power would be a cheap way of getting around and visiting friends.

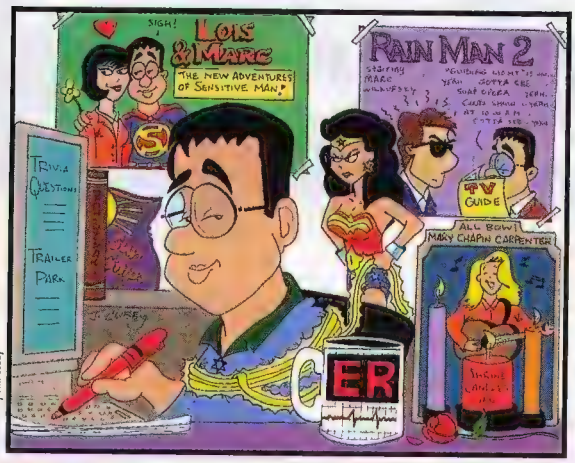


Illustration by Jim Cubby

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 ways the Marvel Universe would be different if it were set in France

10. Captain America would be Captain France—and he would've surrendered to HYDRA and been executed by now.
9. Iron-Mime.
8. The Hulk becomes a pretentious bastard who can only discuss the significance of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.
7. Batroc the Leaper would spend every issue of his regular series appeasing his foes.
6. *Jerry Lewis Team-Up*.
5. It would be the friggin' Nazi Marvel Universe, since the WWII-era Invaders would've folded like a house of cards against the Axis when the first bullet flew!
4. DC would've won *Marvel versus DC*.
3. Avengers' English butler Jarvis out. Acting hunk Gerard Depardieu in.
2. *The Amazing Le Peregrine, Spectacular Le Peregrine, Sensational Le Peregrine* and *Louie DePurine: Le Peregrine*.
1. It'd suck.

CONTEST WINNER

SLEEPWALKING, *Wizard #71*: Mike Harper of Georgetown, Ill., created this spooky voodoo witch doctor!

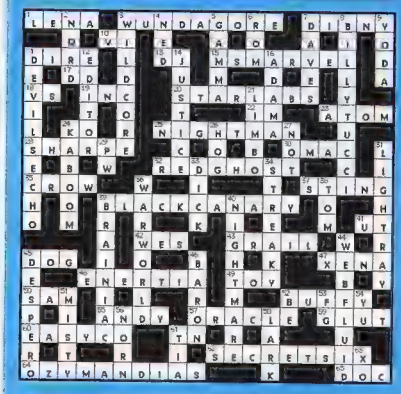
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 196

1. A	5. D	9. A	13. D	17. B
2. D	6. C	10. A	14. B	18. B
3. A	7. B	11. A	15. A	19. C
4. C	8. C	12. D	16. C	20. A

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 197



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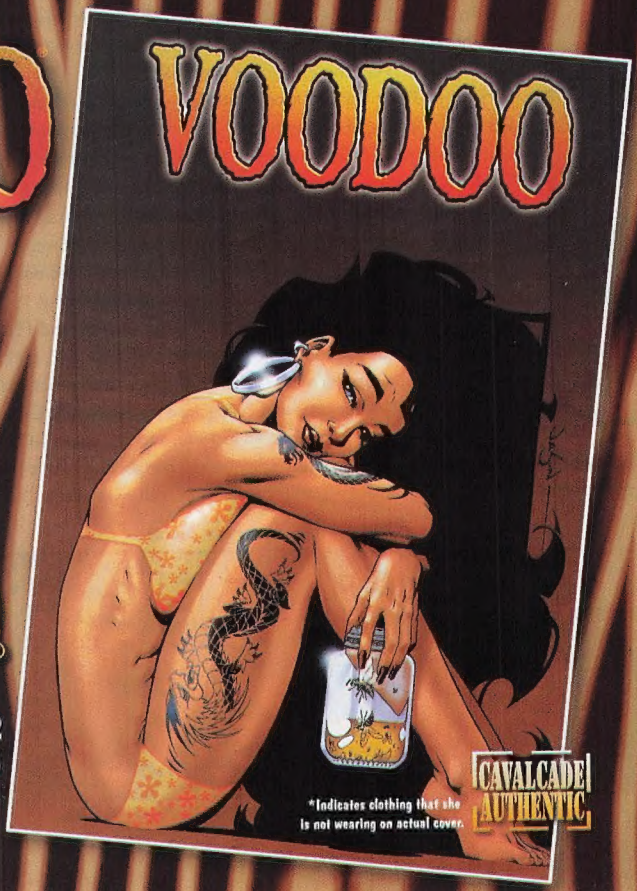

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BY PETER SANDERSON

A TOUCH OF VERTIGO

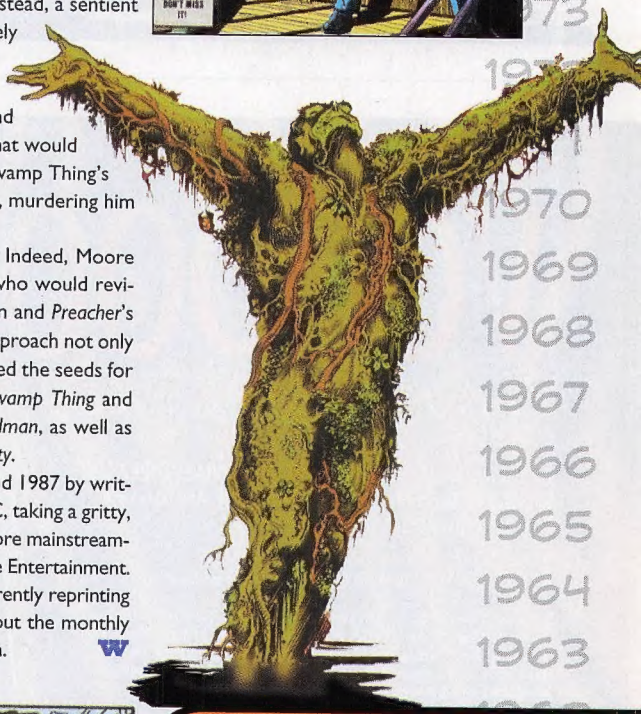
Alan Moore revolutionized horror comics in 'Swamp Thing' 14 years ago

1984 1983 1982 1981 1980 1979 1978 1977 1976 1975 1974 1973 1970 1969 1968 1967 1966 1965 1964 1963

YOU COULD TELL right from the opening lines that everything was different now. "It's raining in Washington tonight. Plump, warm summer rain that covers the sidewalk with leopard spots." This was a new kind of language for mainstream comics, full of rich metaphors, striving towards poetry. That's just how the relatively unknown Alan Moore began "The Anatomy Lesson" in *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #21, cover-dated February 1984. And it marked the birth of modern horror comics.

DC Comics' first major British writer, Moore started on *Saga of the Swamp Thing* with #20, wrapping up an ongoing storyline by seemingly killing the Swamp Thing. His enemy, General Sutherland, hired long-time villain Jason Woodrue (a.k.a. the Floronic Man), to dissect and study the Swamp Thing's corpse. Moore had Woodrue narrate the issue, not in stereotypical bluster, but as a rational, credible individual, who nonetheless displayed a chilling streak of sadism. Even "villains" now would be accorded psychological depth.

Before this story, readers believed this muck-encrusted mockery of a man was yet another clichéd comic archetype, a human trapped in a monster's body. Woodrue, however, proved us all wrong. Swamp Thing was *not* the transformed scientist Alec Holland, but instead, a sentient plant that had absorbed Holland's memories and merely *thought* it was human. Picture this: You're a plant-like creature that thinks and acts like a human. You remember a loving wife. Your research. And then the fire and chemicals that transformed you into this monster. What would you do if you suddenly discovered it was all a lie? In Swamp Thing's case, he went straight for Sutherland in an insane rage, murdering him in cold blood. Yep, the kid gloves were off.

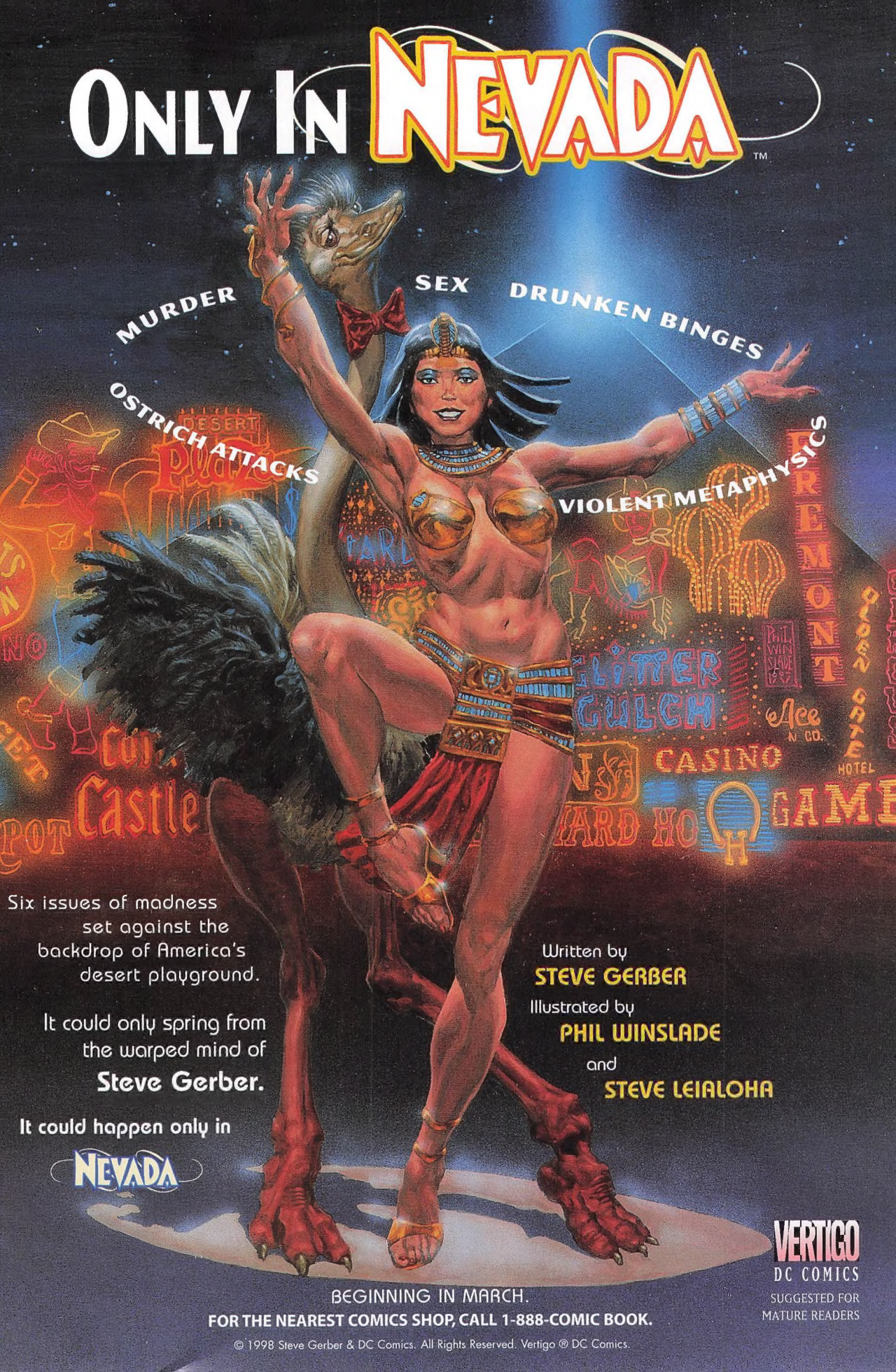


Swamp Thing started a revolution in the industry. Indeed, Moore was only the first of a long line of European writers who would revitalize American comics, including *JLA*'s Grant Morrison and *Preacher*'s Garth Ennis. Moore's philosophical and psychological approach not only opened the door for modern horror comics, but planted the seeds for DC's 1993 launch of its Vertigo imprint, collecting *Swamp Thing* and such offbeat supernatural series as *Hellblazer* and *Sandman*, as well as adding new titles like *The Books of Magic* and *Kid Eternity*.

Moore himself would make more history in 1986 and 1987 by writing the critically acclaimed *Watchmen* mini-series for DC, taking a gritty, realistic look at superheroes. He's since ventured into more mainstream-oriented books like *Supreme* and *Youngblood* for Awesome Entertainment. Ironically, *Swamp Thing* was canceled in 1996, and DC's currently reprinting Moore's run on the title. If you're still not convinced, though, check out the monthly reprints and see for yourself how everything is different...all over again. W

DATELINE: FEBRUARY 1984

Moviegoers got their own taste of vertigo by watching the major theatrical re-release of Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 classic **"Vertigo."**...On Tuesday nights, fans shot over to NBC's **"The A-Team."**...Culture Club's **"Karma Chameleon"** blended into *Billboard*'s music charts....On Feb. 1, U.S. Marines were ordered to withdraw from war-torn Beirut, **Lebanon**. By Feb. 26, they had all left. ●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